

RICE UNIVERSITY

**States of Legitimacy: The British Left, Iraqi Nationalism,
and the 'Spirit of Internationalism,' 1914-1932**

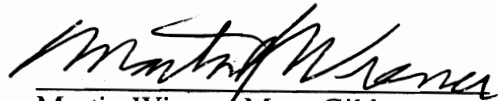
by

David Patrick Getman

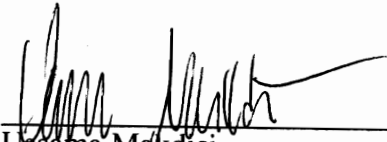
A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

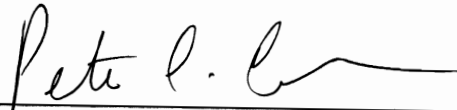
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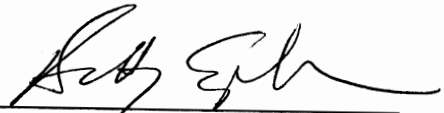
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Abstract

This dissertation is a transnational history of twentieth-century anti-colonial nationalism. It focuses specifically on the connections between the dissenting British left and Iraqi nationalists during the First World War and its aftermath. Based on extensive archival research in English and Arabic of official and unofficial sources in London and Syria, I show how British and Iraqi anti-colonial activists simultaneously sought to democratize British imperial policy-making in the metropole and periphery of the Empire. From its early hours, Liberal and Labour leaders opposed to the First World War campaigned tirelessly for an internationalist settlement without annexations as the only guarantee of lasting peace for the postwar world. Colonial 'national awakenings' in Egypt, India, and Iraq, they argued, both challenged the legitimacy of British 'imperial democracy' and heralded a new era of international democracy deserving British support. Iraq was, for them, a test case for a nobler approach to maintaining international security through nurturing, rather than subjugating, national sovereignty. The British government's unwillingness to relinquish Iraq after the war was taken as evidence of its unfitness to govern free peoples either at home or abroad. Through my research, I am able to show how the so-called 'extreme nationalist' editors of Iraq's daily press followed the development of these arguments globally and adapted them in their attempt to reorient the development of their state around Iraqi national interests. Playing upon the sensitivity of British administrators to domestic and international public opinion, Iraqi nationalists were able to keep the development of their political institutions on a far more democratic course than either the British or Arab elite desired. Thus I show how British and Iraqi figures created a network of dissent that sought to undermine the foundations of

British imperial rule in Iraq and realize the idea of national sovereignty as the capstone of international law, to the detriment of imperial legitimacy globally. This study, I believe, demonstrates how transnational approaches can provide us with a richer understanding of the role of popular nationalism in the birth of the international world in the early twentieth century.

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife,
Stephanie DiCapua Getman.

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Introduction

In August of 1914, British subjects from every corner of the Empire ‘rushed to the colours’ in support of Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith’s defensive war for the ‘rights of small nations’ against the forces of global domination.¹ Despite Asquith’s repeated assurances that the British government had no territorial ambitions of its own in entering the fray, however, by 1920, with four of the world’s great imperial powers left shattered by the war, British territorial influence would expand to include nearly a quarter of the globe. Moreover, within a few years of the armistice, British troops would be asked to turn their arms on nationalist risings, largely inspired by the very principles Asquith had asked them to go to war to uphold, in Ireland, Egypt, India and the newly conquered territory of Iraq. The discrepancy between the promise of self-determination the war seemed to herald and the persistence or even the introduction of British rule in its wake was not lost on subject peoples who, in many cases, had fought shoulder to shoulder with British forces in what they believed was a war for their own national liberation.² Girded by a common sense of hope and betrayal, nationalist movements under British administrations throughout the Empire and beyond struggled into the interwar period to force the British government into conformity with the internationalist principles the war had been fought to defend and the League of Nations had been erected to codify and protect.³ The sense of betrayed loyalties and nationalist aspirations was not limited, however, to the imperial periphery alone.

¹ The First World War was by far the most popular war in British national and imperial history. For a discussion of the domestic support for the war, see David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916* (London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005). For a discussion of the Commonwealth’s involvement, see W. David McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact, 1869-1971*, vol. 9, *Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 181-183. For a discussion of the extensive involvement of Indian troops, see Hugh Tinker, “India in the First World War and After,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 4 (1968): 89-107.

² Erez Manela has offered perhaps the most complete discussion of the hopes for self-determination in occupied territories and their disappointment in Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³ For an influential discussion of nationalist movements in the British Empire after the First World War as a general problem for British imperial policy makers, see John Gallagher, “Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922,” *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 3 (1981): 355-368.

From the hour of its outbreak, a handful of opponents to entering the Great War from the Labour and Liberal camps decried Asquith's explanations for the war as a gross deception designed to veil the fact that British imperial interests had, in fact, been the mainspring of the conflict. Moreover, if permitted to do so, the British government would surely use the settlement of the war to ensure its own global dominance in its wake.⁴ Even as the Asquith administration was preparing the diplomatic and administrative framework for Britain's postwar 'Empire in the East' in the fall of 1914, the politicians and propagandists writing for the Union of Democratic Control and the Independent Labour Party, the 'sister centers of dissent' during the war, were laying the groundwork for a popular movement in Britain to fully democratize, root and branch, not only the British political system, but the entire inter-imperial system of European oligarchy from metropolises to periphery beginning with the British Empire.

As the persistence of British imperial rule through to the 1960's attests, neither of the related zeitgeists of anti-colonial nationalism in the 'east' or anti-imperial internationalism in the 'west' would fully achieve the ends the grassroots activists responsible for generating them had envisioned. Nevertheless, over the course of the war and into the interwar period, organized opposition to the return to imperial 'business as usual' emanating primarily out of the Labour movement in Britain, the "classical centres of disaffection" in Ireland, India, and Egypt,⁵ and the ambiguously defined region of British-occupied Iraq posed a collective problem for British policy makers, if not a conspiratorial network of dissent, that threatened to undermine not only the security of British administrations abroad, but the principle of 'imperial democracy' itself as a legitimate form of government in the postwar world.⁶ Although this dissertation does not

⁴ The most complete overview of organized British opposition to the First World War is Keith Robbins' *The Abolition of War: The "Peace Movement" in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976). A more detailed examination of the foremost political opponents to the Asquith and Lloyd George administrations during the war emanating out of the Labour and Liberal Parties can be found in Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914-1918* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996); Helena Maria Swanwick, *Builders of Peace: Being Ten Years' History of the Union of Democratic Control* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1973); and Robert Edward Dowse, *Left in the Centre: the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1940* (London: Longmans, 1966).

⁵ The words are John Gallagher's, Gallagher, "Nationalisms," p. 355.

⁶ For a rare discussion of official conspiracy thinking about domestic and imperial anti-colonial nationalist movements in the British government, see John Fisher, "Major Norman Bray and Eastern Unrest in the

argue for the existence of an international or even an intra-imperial conspiracy to take down the British Empire, it does attempt to illustrate how anti-colonial nationalism in the metropole and periphery of the British Empire acted collectively on British imperial policy making and to argue the benefits of a transnational approach to the study of both as a unified category of inquiry.

For the ‘dissenting left’ in Britain, the postwar persistence of imperial domination in the possessions of Ireland, India, and Egypt and the introduction of it in Iraq were the greatest evidence that Britain herself was the true imperial hegemon behind the Great War for global domination. Every act of anti-colonial resistance in those regions, I argue, gave dissenting writers grist for the mill of critique seeking to cast Tories and Whigs alike as the parties of imperial conquest and war and fuel for the propaganda machine reinventing British Labour as the party of a dawning age of internationalism and global democracy. In their turn, Ireland, India, Egypt, and Iraq all took full advantage of the language of internationalism that dissenting writers had appropriated from Asquith’s calls to arms and transformed into a movement for a League of Nations in building cases for their own independence over the interwar period.⁷ The geographical point over which the forces of anti-colonial nationalism at the metropole and periphery of the British Empire would have the most powerful collective and cumulative influence, however, was in British occupied Iraq.

Although direct collaboration or even communication between the dissenting left in Britain and the nationalist movements in the periphery was limited at best and almost non-existent in Iraq, the impact of the collective efforts of anti-colonial nationalist movements throughout the Empire on British policy and political development in Iraq would be far more profound and immediate than in any other region in the Empire. As the flagship nation-making project of the League of Nations from 1920, every step the Anglo-Iraqi condominium took along the road to full self-determination would, in its turn,

British Empire in the Aftermath of World War I,” *Archives* 27, no. 106 (2002): 39-56 and Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 6.

⁷ See John Horne, “James Connolly and the Great Divide: Ireland, Europe, and the First World War,” *Saothar* 31 (2006): 75-83; Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1971); Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1971).

serve as an irrevocable benchmark for the devolution of British imperial power into the hands of subject peoples globally. At every stage of Iraqi national development under British auspices, from her occupation in 1914 to her emancipation from British rule in 1932, representatives of the dissenting left and, later, two Labour governments under their leadership, supported Iraqi demands for self-determination in principled opposition to the stifling of national progress in the name of imperial interests everywhere. It is the overarching thesis of this dissertation that the *collective* effort of the dissenting left and Iraqi anti-colonial nationalists to influence the direction of the Anglo-Iraqi nation-making project over the course of the First World War and interwar period served as a catalyst for the birth or, at the very least, the conception of the post-colonial nation-state of Iraq *as well as* the post-imperial nation-state of Britain in approximately the same historical moment.

At its heart, this dissertation is a transnational history of anti-colonial nationalism and the origins of British decolonization in the twentieth-century. Its central argument, however, is not that anti-colonial nationalism in either the metropole or periphery of the British Empire was the foremost cause of the Empire's decline and disintegration, though both clearly contributed to that end. Rather, I argue that, in the context of the world's first global inter-imperial war, an efflorescence of anti-colonial nationalism at the metropole of the British Empire exponentially amplified the pressure anti-colonial nationalism in the periphery immediately after the war could bring to bear on the British government in a mutually reciprocating way. As a result, the progress of colonial and metropolitan nationalist movements in the British Empire became inextricably linked for the first time in its history. Although the path toward decolonization would proceed in fits and starts for the duration of the century, it was no coincidence that a Labour government would play as crucial a role in the dismantling of the Empire in the 1940's and then again in the 1960's as it had at the beginning of that process in midwifing the first internationally sanctioned imperial nation-making project in Iraq during the war and the final emancipation of Iraq from British rule in 1932.

This dissertation is organized into three sections framed around the path of the Anglo-Iraqi nation-making project from its genesis in British public debate over the 'ultimate destination' of territories occupied during the First World War, to its codification as a mandate under the League of Nations, and finally to its implementation over the interwar period and culmination in Iraqi independence in 1932. The first three-chapter section takes a closer look at the role imperial issues played in the Labour movement's eclipse of Liberalism as the main party of opposition over the course of the war and its implications for British foreign and imperial policies during the war and its immediate wake especially as they pertained to the occupation of Iraq.

There is little question for historians about whether the First World War saw a sea change for British politics in Labour's favor⁸ or that intra-imperial relations had been transformed so dramatically in the immediate wake of the war as to constitute a 'Third British Empire' characterized 'informal,' if not entirely consensual, imperial rule.⁹ Although Labour's traditional opposition to the rise of 'new imperialism' in Britain in the late nineteenth-century and the critique of 'imperial democracy' produced by its leaders has been well documented,¹⁰ it is the general consensus of historians interested in the Labour movement, British anti-colonialism, and decolonization that Labour attitudes about the Empire before the Second World War were largely irrelevant to the course of imperial policy, largely because imperial policy was somewhat irrelevant to the Labour

⁸ For an excellent survey of the many arguments about the decline of Liberalism and rise of Labour, see Keith Laybourn, "The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate," *History* 80, no. 259 (1995): pp. 207-226.

⁹ The phrase appeared earliest in Alfred Eckhard Zimmern, *The Third British Empire, Being a Course of Lectures Delivered at Columbia University, New York, by Alfred Zimmern* (London: H. Milford, 1926), pp. 1-45. For a discussion of the impact of the war on Commonwealth relations, see A. G. Hopkins, "Rethinking Decolonization," *Past & Present* 200, no. 1 (2008): 211-247 and McIntyre, *Commonwealth of Nations*. For a discussion on the impact on colonial relations, see John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* Vol. 6, no. 1 (1953); and Gallagher, "Nationalisms."

¹⁰ For a classic overview of British attitudes toward the Empire focusing on the publications of individuals, see A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan and Co. LTD, 1959). Bernard Porter offers an account more inclusive of social and political contexts in Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968) and Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Although Partha Gupta's study of Labour's interest in India broke ground in excavating Labour's interest in colonial independence struggles, she concludes, with Howe, that Labour invariably compromised its stand on colonial independence over issues of domestic and economic import during this period. Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975), p. 132.

movement.¹¹ At most, it has been argued, Labour contributed only indirectly to the curtailment of imperial maneuver during the war by spearheading the movement for a League of Nations in Britain, though driven by internationalist ideals, rather than anti-imperial designs.¹²

This first three chapters of this study challenge these assumptions with evidence drawn from the official records and documents, annual reports, periodicals, propaganda, and other related materials emanating out of various Labour organizations affiliated with the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the traditional left wing of the British Labour movement, and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), a Liberal-led pressure group established at the outbreak of the war. I supplement these materials with publications and propaganda representing alternative and mainstream views of the war and imperial policy as well as with debates over these issues in the British Parliament. Finally, I excavate both the progress of imperial policy itself and the official mind of the government about its opposition from a variety of official documents of the British Cabinet and the Foreign and Colonial Offices.

¹¹ Although Stephen Howe dedicates a chapter in his book to pre-Second World War anti-colonialism in Britain, he identifies the 1930's as a turning point in Labour thinking, noting that, before then, Labour was "primarily if not exclusively concerned with domestic problems." Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1939-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 45. Also see John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-23; Bernard Porter has argued that what attention Labour leaders did give to imperial issues was mostly an extension of existing anti-capitalist attitudes, limited to a critique of the function of subject peoples as exploitable workers and culminating in a socialist notion of a 'moral imperialism.' Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire*, pp. 124-133 and 185-6; Also see Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 21-25, 7-9, and 40-44.

¹² For Labour's contribution to the League of Nations movement in Great Britain, see Henry R. Winkler, *The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain: 1914-1919* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1952); Kenneth J Calder, *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1976); For a discussion favoring Labour's role in pressuring the Lloyd George administration into joining the league, see George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914-1919*, Supplementary Volumes to the Papers of Woodrow Wilson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978) and Leslie A. Hammond, *The British Progressive Contribution to the League of Nations Ideas*, Dissertation (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2001). For Labour's disappointment with the League, see Lucian M Ashworth, *International Relations and the Labour Party: Intellectuals and Policy Making from 1918-1945* (London; New York, 2007), Chapters 1 and 2; For a recent work challenging the influence of the British left on Lloyd George's attitude toward the League, see Peter J Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914-1925* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Others historians have shown that the ILP and UDC¹³ provided the main conduits for drawing disaffected Liberal and Labour minded Britons into the Labour movement during the war as well as the leadership nucleus and political program for the post-war Labour Party.¹⁴ In the first chapter, I illustrate that the UDC and ILP's campaign to reinvent British Labour as a viable leadership alternative clearly reflected the legacy of imperial critique produced by its leaders over decades prior. It was the rise of the 'new imperialism' in the late nineteenth century, they argued, that had led to the corruption, perhaps deliberately, of an essential political identification with the principles of democracy and nationality in Britain and, thus, the collapse of Britain's democratic civic and political identity. As a result, an 'Egyptian temple' of ruling class policy makers had been permitted to doom the British to endless war in the name of imperial power without a whisper of popular dissent, or even awareness, from a people increasingly accustomed to an anti-democratic political life. I argue that Asquith's presentation of an inter-imperial war of conquest as a war of liberation presented an opportunity for dissenting leaders to use the transfer of territory that would inevitably accompany an Allied victory as a means of discrediting the government as having lied to the British people about its aims and, thus, revealing its disregard for democracy in principle, be it at home or abroad.

The second chapter describes a parallel development over the first half of the war of two competing ideas about the role of the British Empire in the postwar world. An examination of official government documents pertaining to the occupation of Iraq in the early hours of the war reveal a British government reluctant to expand its direct responsibilities in the region, but also keenly aware of the opportunity, if not the necessity, of staking its claim to dominance in the Persian Gulf at that precise historical

¹³ The most recent work on the UDC is Sally Harris' *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914-1918* (Hull]: University of Hull Press, 1996. The most comprehensive history of the movement remains, however, Marvin Swartz's *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). There are surprisingly few studies dedicated to the ILP during this period, the two most comprehensive being Helena Maria Swanwick, *Builders of Peace: Being Ten Years' History of the Union of Democratic Control* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1973); and Robert Edward Dowse, *Left in the Centre; the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1940* (London: Longmans, 1966).

¹⁴ For a study of the influx of disaffected Liberals into the Labour movement through the UDC and the ILP during this period, see Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party, 1914-1931* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963). Also see footnote 11 above.

moment.¹⁵ Even as British administrators set about the construction of 'New India' in Iraq and British diplomats secretly settled their claims to it, reports of the occupation of Iraq were characterized by the language of liberation. One of the key advantages of presenting the British Empire as a force for liberation, rather than occupation or, worse, exploitation, I argue, was that it answered directly to the alternative vision of the Empire being presented by dissenting propagandists.¹⁶ UDC and ILP writers, I show, also attempted a reimagining of the British Empire as a postwar force for liberation, but on the basis that the prevailing legacy of British 'imperial democracy' to date had been a global stifling of national progress and an endless series of inter-imperial wars. Contrary to Asquith's conception of the British Empire as the most promising force for making the world safe for democracy, dissenting writers argued that 'imperial democracy' was national democracy's clearest antithesis. In addition to proliferating the subjugation of national aspirations, imperial expansion also necessitated the militarization of British society to keep down the natives and fend off their rivals. The choice before the British people was to permit their government to restart the cycle of war by annexing its most recent spoils or transform Great Britain into a force for dismantling the whole system of subject peoples at the heart of inter-imperial war by beginning the emancipation of its own possessions and erecting a League of Nations to guide that process globally.

The third chapter of this dissertation examines the efforts of UDC and ILP leaders to translate a series of events that seemed to vindicate their arguments about the war and imperial democracy into political capital for the Labour movement. In so doing, I make an argument for a far more aggressive and influential role of the dissenting left in

¹⁵ The most complete discussion of the occupation of Mesopotamia as a matter of British policy can be found in Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: Associated University Presses, 1994). For a discussion of the occupation as it was viewed by Mesopotamian Arabs, see Ghassan R Atiyah, *Iraq 1908-1921 A Political Study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973). Among the studies of the mandate period in Iraq as a whole, the most comprehensive works remain the 1937 classic Philip Willard Ireland, *'Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London: Kegan Paul, Original Publication in 1937) and the 1976 update Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976). For a more recent consideration of the mandate in relation to later Iraqi socio-political development, see Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Priya Satia has argued that representing the liberation of Iraq worked as a kind of imperial redemption on a deeper psychological level for Britons and their leaders, see Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 5.

bringing about the demise of British Liberalism and Lloyd George's acquiescence to an internationalist peace as well as the place of imperial issues in their political agenda.¹⁷

With the advent of conscription and Lloyd George's declaration that he intended to fight the war to the 'knock-out blow' in 1916, UDC and ILP writers warned their readers that the public transition from a defensive war to a war for global domination was underway and would mean the collapse of the democracy movement in Britain for generations even in the best case of a British victory.¹⁸ With the fall of Asquith to Lloyd George that December, they argued, that transformation had been completed.

The demand for a negotiated peace that dissenting propagandists and politicians had been making from the beginning of the war was given a tremendous fillip, however, with the outspoken support of Woodrow Wilson over 1916 and into 1917, casting Lloyd George's intransigence in an increasingly suspicious light.¹⁹ Lloyd George's argument that only a military victory would bring a definitive end to German ambitions for global domination was significantly undermined in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the revelation of secret Allied agreements dating back to 1915 to divide and annex the occupied territories of the Ottoman Empire at wars end.²⁰ The fact that the British had already effectively occupied the majority of the territories involved and begun the process of administering it was particularly damning evidence in the hands of the dissenting left. As my examination of UDC and ILP shows, dissenting writers seized

¹⁷ In both Swartz and Harris, the fall of the Asquith administration and the rise of Lloyd George are represented as something that happens *to* the UDC and the ILP, for better or worse, and not as something that they themselves believed they had contributed to. See Swartz, Chapter 7 and 8 and Harris, Chapter 4. For a discussion of the gravitation of the Lloyd George administration toward the League idea and an internationalist peace that privileges the role of internationalist 'idealists' on the British left, see Henry R. Winkler, *League of Nations Movement* and Egerton, *Creation of the League of Nations*. For more recent work arguing, against Winkler and Egerton, that Lloyd George was in support of a League idea based on international security from the beginning of his administration, see Peter J Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914-1925* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁸ Perhaps the most complete discussion of conscription and British reactions to it along the lines mentioned above is in R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ For a rare discussion of the role dissenting thinkers had in inspiring Wilson's thought on an internationalist settlement, see Laurence W. Martin, *Peace without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the British Liberals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958).

²⁰ For the impact of the Russian Revolution on British politics, see Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, Harvard historical monographs 30 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956) and Gerhard Schulz, *Revolutions and peace treaties, 1917-1920*; (London: Methuen, 1972).

upon the revelation as the clearest evidence that Asquith and Lloyd George after him had intended to use the war as an opportunity to shore up British global domination from the very beginning, in spite of the cost to the British nation and the principles of nationality and democracy. When Lloyd George persisted in refusing to either commit to an internationalist peace or openly declare his imperial ambitions, the Parliamentary Labour Party independently announced its support for a peace without annexations or indemnities in the fall of 1917, shifting the mass of the Labour movement definitively into line with the UDC and ILP's peace agenda. Accordingly, dissenting leaders celebrated Lloyd George's announcement of his acceptance in principle of an internationalist peace and his recognition of British occupied Iraq's right to her own 'separate national condition' in January 1918 as a victory for the Labour movement as a whole, but also as an acknowledgement of its legitimacy as viable party of opposition and a vindication of its ideals for the postwar British Empire.

The second section of this dissertation considers the role that British public opinion and Arab nationalism played in the planning and codification of the Lloyd George administration's 'mandate solution' to the problem of keeping control of British occupied Iraq after the war.²¹ Generally viewed as a concession of appearances to Woodrow Wilson's vision for the League of Nations, the British government's designation of Iraq as deserving of independence, but dependent upon a prolonged period of British 'tutelage' to attain it was an almost archetypical representation of the postwar transition to 'indirect imperialism.'²² Through an examination of the official records of the British Cabinet, the reports of various imperial administrations in Foreign and Colonial Office records, Parliamentary debates, League of Nations documents, dissenting

²¹ The mandate system as a system has not been a popular subject of study for some time. For an early history of the mandate idea and its implantation at the League, see Quincy Wright, *Mandates Under the League of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930). For a discussion of the official mind of the government on the mandates, see Wm. Roger Louis, "The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System, 1919-1922," *International Organization* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter 1969): 73-96.

²² Toby Dodge makes this argument specifically in Toby Dodge, "Iraq: The Contradictions of Exogenous State-Building in Historical Perspective," in *From Nation-Building to State-Building*, ed. Mark T. Berger (London: Routledge, 2008). Also, see Egerton, *Creation of the League of Nations*, Chapter 6; G. H. Bennet, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period, 1919-1924* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), Chapter 6; and Peter J Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914-1925* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Chapter 1.

propaganda and the personal accounts of Arab representatives at the League, I argue, that the advent of the mandate in Iraq was as much a testament to the British government's new susceptibility to public opinion as it was to the persistence of British imperial influence and power in the postwar world.

Although the mandate system was 'invented' by a British imperial administrator²³ as a means of preserving imperial influence through the façade of indigenous self-government, it mirrored the very role envisioned for the League of Nations by dissenting writers as a means of midwifing the end of the inter-imperial system.²⁴ Immediately following Lloyd George's recognition of Iraq's provisional independence in 1918, policy planners scrambled to assemble a 'British case' for postwar control in Iraq with the understanding that, although public opinion had made annexation impossible, relinquishing control of Iraq could very well spell the end of Britain's eastern empire. The solution Britain's most seasoned imperial administrators arrived at in the spring of 1918 was to find sufficiently legitimate Arab leader and convince him to declare before the League of Nations and the world that a temporary period of indirect British rule was precisely what he and Arab peoples everywhere most desired. To obtain such a spokesman, British officials made unprecedented concessions of sovereignty on paper, raising the hopes of Arabs and dissenting propagandists alike that the transition from an inter-imperial to an international world was, in fact, beginning.

Although such efforts succeeded in ferrying the Empire through the troubled waters of the internationalist peace, British and Arab public opinion was not so easily satisfied. In response to Lloyd George's appointment of Great Britain as the mandatory power in Iraq without reference to either Iraqi or British opinion, dissenting leaders, now at the helm of the Labour Party itself, decried the mandates as a victor's peace and the realization of the Secret Treaties of 1915. Moreover, at the Second Socialist International in 1920, Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald declared his Party's commitment to applying

²³ See Jan Christiaan Smuts, *The League of Nations; a Practical Suggestion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918).

²⁴ For Labour's conception of a mandate idea, see Henry R. Winkler, *League of Nations Movement*, Chapter 8.; H. R. G. Greaves, *The League Committees and World Order; a Study of the Permanent Expert Committees of the League of Nations as an Instrument of International Government* (London, Oxford University Press: H. Milford, 1931); Lucian M. Ashworth, *International Relations and the Labour Party: Intellectuals and Policy Making from 1918-1945* (London ; New York, 2007), Chapter 2.

the principle underlying the mandate system to all British possessions. As for the Iraqi Arabs, the announcement of the mandate in 1920 sparked a region-wide revolt, spurred largely by the nationalist propaganda of Britain's own Arab spokesman, Faysal bin Husayn, that would take months and millions in sterling to violently put down.²⁵ Labour propagandists took full advantage of the 1920 rising in portraying the Lloyd George administration as hopelessly archaic in its anti-democratic imperialist ambitions and the Labour Party as the only legitimate alternative government in the dawning age of internationalism.

The third section of this dissertation considers the progress of the Anglo-Iraqi nation-making project from the establishment of the Iraqi Council of State in 1920 to Iraqi emancipation from British rule and admission to the League of Nations in 1932.²⁶ With very few exceptions, the story of the mandate period in Iraq has been represented as a contest of wills between the dynastic or nationalistic aspirations of Iraq's first King, Faysal bin Husayn, and the efforts of a series of British High Commissioners to build into the very infrastructure of the Iraqi state the mechanisms of indirect British control.²⁷ This study approaches the Iraqi mandate, rather, as a political space opened up by grassroots anti-colonial nationalist movements in Britain and Iraq and in which those movements exhibited a significant degree of influence on what sort of state British administrators and their Arab clients were able to impose on the Iraqi people. In addition to all of the sources mentioned for previous sections, the final three chapters draw from the official records of Britain's Baghdad Residency, intelligence summaries from British Political Officers stationed throughout Iraq, and selections from the Iraqi daily press collected in supplementary reports by the Baghdad Residency.

The fifth chapter focuses primarily on Iraqi and British reactions to the 1920 rising and the early stages of implementing the 'Arab Façade' of self-government in Iraq.

²⁵ For the most complete consideration of Iraqi reactions to the occupation and the mandate, see Ghassan R Atiyah, *Iraq 1908-1921 A Political Study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973).

²⁶ Among the studies of the mandate period in Iraq as a whole, the most comprehensive works remain the classic works by Ireland and Sluglett. For a more recent consideration of the mandate in relation to later Iraqi socio-political development, see Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003).

²⁷ The most important exception is the recent work by Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-87.

Although the Iraqi press has occupied a remarkably small place in the historiography, through an examination of press supplements included in the weekly intelligence reports produced by British administrators out of the Baghdad Residency, I demonstrate that the Iraqi newspaper editors and journalists played a crucial role in mobilizing Iraqi public opinion about the mandate and guiding it into a formidable popular political movement that would have a significant influence on the progress of the Iraqi state.²⁸

From the earliest publications after the 1920 rising, I illustrate a pervasive conviction among Iraqi newspaper editors and journalists that the decision of the British Government to rule Iraq through the guise of a mandate was a clear indication of the weakness of imperial power in what they identified as a dawning age of national awakening among imperial citizens and subject peoples the world over. Moreover, Iraqi editors argued, as the 1920 rising demonstrated and the immediate replacement of an openly colonial administration with an Iraqi Council of State in its wake confirmed, the Iraqi people had forcibly established themselves at the forefront of that global struggle for emancipation. Casting themselves as the catalyst for Iraq's still nascent literary and political culture, as well as its watchdog, the so-called 'extreme nationalist' Iraqi press immediately undertook the task of educating Iraqis about the principles of democracy, constitutionalism, and internationalism that defined modern global political society and encouraging them to nurture Iraqi political life with their voices and, when the time came, with their votes.²⁹

Although policy planners had indeed already been committed to erecting an Arab Façade in Iraq before the 1920 rising,³⁰ I argue that the fervor raised in its wake by Labour propagandists amplified its effect on the Lloyd George administration. Accordingly, plans to install a provisional government, arrange for the 'election' of Faysal as head of state, and augment the mandate with an Anglo-Iraqi Treaty were

²⁸ The Iraqi press appears in most studies of the mandate period, though usually in a very peripheral role as a reflection of popular dissatisfaction with British rule. Perhaps the most extensive discussion of the press in the classic works mentioned above is Ireland's *'Iraq'*. Orit Bashkin has recently offered the definitive ethnographic discussion of Iraqi editors, though she does not discuss the extent of their influence on the progress of Iraqi government. See Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-87.

²⁹ Bashkin also acknowledges this self-perception, see Bashkin, pp. 28.

³⁰ Ireland's view, for example, is that the 1920 rising not only set the program for self-government back, but opened the door for a retrogression in the form the government would ultimately take. See Ireland, pp. 220-296.

dramatically accelerated.³¹ Using British and American political practices as their guide and Britain's colonialist history as their goad, I demonstrate, Iraqi editors challenged the blatantly unconstitutional manner in which their administrators attempted to foist a façade of self-government upon them with publications designed to educate the Iraqi people in the practices of constitutional democracy as well as those of imperial administration posing as such in British possessions. In its challenges to the constitutionality of the Residency's attempts to impose an appointed Council of State, a constitution, and even a King on the Iraqi people, the Iraqi press set a clear pattern for Iraqi political development. Although the Residency would repeatedly succeed in forcing its agenda through a series of Iraqi assemblies, some concessions to nationalist demands or constitutionalist principles were usually involved. By pushing British tolerance for such opposition to its absolute limit, I argue, the Iraqi nationalist press forced the Residency to reveal the colonial nature of British rule in Iraq to the Iraqi people, but also its dependence upon a modicum of Iraqi consent by conceding, even if only in the smallest degree, to its demands. High Commissioner Percy Cox's decision to seize the opportunity of Faysal's sudden illness in the summer of 1922 to suppress the Iraqi press and force the passage of the first Anglo-Iraqi Treaty through the an intransigent Iraqi Council, but only with the concession that later adjustments on the contentions points railed against in the Iraqi press could be made, I argue, was an early and ideal example of this pattern as well as the power of the Iraqi press. For its part, in the Parliament and the press, Labour or Labour affiliated propagandists took full advantage of such frustrations to illustrate the Lloyd George administration's persistent lack of conformity with the principles of the mandate. As news of British interests in developing Iraq's oil reserves came to light over the early years of the mandate, Labour propagandists seized upon it as yet more evidence of the government's exploitative agenda for its costly imperialist adventure.³²

³¹ For a discussion of the domestic and international forces driving this acceleration, see Christopher Catherwood, *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq* (New York: Carroll & Graf Pub., 2004).

³² Attention to the growing opposition to continuing the mandate in Iraq appears in most studies of the mandate, but only very peripherally and usually cast as a general disgruntlement of British taxpayers for the cost of the mandate. The role of Labour in generating such opposition is never mentioned. See, for example, Ireland, pp. 311-313 and Sluglett, pp. 69, 76, and 79.

The sixth chapter of this dissertation chronicles the odyssey of forcing the Iraqi government to ratify an Anglo-Iraqi Treaty most Iraqis believed would codify their status as a British protectorate, the opposition of the Iraqi and British press, and the impact that Turkey's unexpected claim to possession of Mosul in 1924 had on that process. Immediately following Cox's administrative *coup*, those Iraqi editors permitted to resume publication undertook to mobilize the Iraqi public into political parties in preparation for the coming series of elections.³³ Unable to forestall the advance of Iraqi popular political life without delegitimizing the Arab Façade both in Iraq and in Britain, the Residency sought to directly engage it with their own vernacular papers and the collaborative construction of a system of political patronage through Faysal's Sherifian court around their more 'moderate' Iraqi clients.³⁴ As negotiations over the drafting and passage of crucial instruments of government progressed, the Iraqi political landscape polarized over the question of whether an alliance with the British or their ejection would prove the quickest path to 'complete independence.' The nationalist press in Iraq was emboldened in its opposition to the, ostensibly, pro-British stance of the Palace by the advances being made against British domination in Ireland, Egypt, and India, but especially by the seeming polarization of British society as well over the government's commitment to staying the course in Iraq and the popular movement to end the mandate emanating out of Labour propaganda.

Even as the Iraqi people were learning the power of political organization, however, they were also learning the limitations of democracy in what largely remained an inter-imperial world. For although the pressure Iraqi nationalists could bring to bear on the Residency, the Palace, and the 'moderate' Iraqi majority was growing, the contest between the British and Turkish governments and, later, the League of Nations, over the fate of the petroliferous region of Mosul from 1924-1926 brought Iraqi dependence upon

³³ Where the Iraqi press is considered by historians, it is usually in relation to the emergence of political parties in Iraq which are viewed as controlling the press. See, for example, Amy Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 93-95.

³⁴ In Ireland, Sluglett, and Dodge, Iraqi political life is viewed almost exclusively as an extension of the Sherifian patronage system and occasional but not very formidable opposition to it.

British imperial influence into sharp relief.³⁵ British Labour, I argue, was learning a similar lesson as the Party came into government for the first time in 1924. For although Labour had campaigned on the emancipation of Iraq, a combination of domestic, inter-imperial, and internationalist obligations limited their intervention to merely preventing the Residency from disbanding an intransigent Iraqi assembly and ratifying the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty by Royal decree.³⁶ Faced with what Iraqi editors believed would be the immediate evacuation of the British, the loss of Mosul, and presumably Turkish occupation, Iraqi moderates and nationalists alike accepted the concession of their national rights in ratifying a constitution, oil concessions, and the Treaty as the requisite British ‘ransom’ for the mere integrity of their state in 1926. Nevertheless, when denied the right to debate the final passage of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, Labour, then in the opposition, and the main party of nationalist opposition in Iraq both walked out of their respective Houses in protest in late 1925 and early 1926.

The seventh and concluding chapter of this dissertation illustrates how a multiplicity of political forces generated by the British and Iraqi governments and organized opposition to those governments came into play in defining Anglo-Iraqi relations as the state gradually passed from British to Iraqi control from 1926 to 1932. With the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in 1926, Iraqi independence became merely a matter of time. Accordingly, as other historians have shown, the Baldwin administration and the Sherifian court became locked in a contest over the precise measure of sovereignty Iraq would formally concede to the British in exchange for Baldwin’s support for League membership.³⁷ Although negotiating the formal transaction, codified in a second Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, was clearly a Palace affair, I argue

³⁵ The struggle between Britain and Turkey over possession of Mosul is almost exclusively viewed by historians as a matter of international politics in which Iraqi opinion factors not at all. See, for example, Peter J. Beck, “‘A Tedious and Perilous Controversy’: Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926.,” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.17, No.2 (1981): 256-276.

³⁶ Although Labour’s policy on Iraq does not factor into the story, a good account of Labour’s experiences with the ‘taming responsibilities of office’ in the 1920’s can be found in David Howell, *MacDonald’s Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³⁷ Sluglett, Chapter 4; Ireland, Chapter 22; and Toby Dodge, “International Obligation, Domestic Pressure, and Colonial Nationalism; The Birth of the Iraqi State Under the Mandate System,” in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives/ Les Mandats Français et Anglais Dans Une Perspective Comparative*, ed. Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 143-164.

that the force Faysal could bring to bear on British negotiators stemmed directly from a dramatically expanding 'extreme nationalist' political movement of a decidedly anti-British and even anti-League of Nations tone in this period.³⁸ Using the moderate pro-British majority he himself had engineered to keep the Treaty negotiations from totally collapsing, Faysal utterly undermined any semblance of democracy or constitutionalism by rigging elections and swapping ministers and Prime Ministers to encourage the impression among Iraqi moderates and British negotiators alike that radical nationalism, now able to draw thousands into the street in protests, was practically on the verge of a *coup d'état*. By 1929, however, Faysal was only able to achieve a stalemate of negotiations with the intransigent Baldwin administration.

Matters changed dramatically with the advent of a second, stronger Labour government in 1929. Within months of taking office, the MacDonald administration announced its intentions to offer its unconditional support for Iraqi membership in the League of Nations and to replace the stagnated Anglo-Iraqi Treaty with one more in line with international, rather than intra-imperial, norms.³⁹ Although not the wholesale democratization of the British Empire called for during the war, I argue, Labour's emancipation of Iraq points up the persistence of Labour's anti-colonial nationalist roots. It was because of Labour's legacy of opposition to the mandate that, even in the face of other inter-imperial responsibilities that had 'tamed' Labour in office, the liberation of Iraq remained within the realm of the possible. This fact was not lost on Faysal or Iraqi nationalists, who had been awaiting just such an opportunity.

When Labour took office, Faysal reshuffled the government yet again to set the stage for new treaty negotiations and then again to lay the groundwork for shoring up the monarchy as the absolute power center of the Iraqi state. The popular demand for the immediate ousting of British advisors and opposition to even the adjusted treaty

³⁸ Sluglett has made a similar argument, but focuses exclusively on Iraqi politicians he views as primarily self-serving with little attention to the political parties as such. See Sluglett, Chapter 4.

³⁹ Sluglett, like Ireland, merely identifies the advent of a Labour government as a transition point for British policy without an analysis of Labour's view of the mandate. See Sluglett, pp. 141-170; Toby Dodge's more recent study of the mandate period does point out that Faysal deliberately "paralyzed" Iraqi politics as a means of pressuring the British into acquiescing to his demands, but offers no consideration of Iraqi politics *per se* or attempts to make an argument for the actual influence of Faysal's efforts on the negotiations. Dodge goes a bit beyond Ireland and Sluglett in recognizing that the "Labour minority government... was not constrained by the imperial ideology of its predecessor," but that comment is the extent of his analysis. See Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, pp. 34-37.

relationship continued to be encouraged by Faysal for the advantage of making whatever treaty arrangement he finally settled seem less like a compromise and more like the latest British *fait accompli* in spite of his negotiators best efforts. With negotiations complete by 1930 and Iraqi independence imminent, Nuri al Said, the member of the Sherifian court who would dominate Iraqi politics for the next quarter century, began gradually drawing Iraqi nationalist leaders he and Faysal had supported in the preceding years into the government and shutting out and suppressing more independent figures and parties. In so doing, I argue, Faysal and Nuri imbued an increasingly authoritarian Iraqi monarchy with a degree of nationalist legitimacy that would carry it into the 1950's, but also galvanized the underground nationalist movements shut out of the government that would lead to the birth of the Iraqi Republic and the death, literally and figuratively, of the Sherifian court.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Perhaps the most comprehensive study of underground Iraqi nationalist movements and their socio-political origins remains Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba`Thists, and Free Officers*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

Chapter 1: A 'Contest of Mobilization'

The news that an Austro-Serbian conflict over the murder of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo had, in little more than a month, escalated into a pan-European conflagration involving their own Government's declaration of war on Germany undoubtedly came as great shock to most Britons in the summer of 1914.¹ Had not the *Times* conveyed the sentiment of the King himself that his personal negotiations over the shared commercial interests of Britain with Germany and the Ottoman Empire were "rapidly approaching a satisfactory issue" earlier that year?² Those statesmen privy to or participant in recent British foreign relations were, of course, well aware of the increasing likelihood that growing inter-imperial tensions on the continent could draw British forces into the fray. Such relations were conducted far from the eye of the public or even the Parliament, however, and through "methods so secret and precarious" that, according to John Callaghan, *au courant* officials were increasingly concerned that "the outbreak of a major war might be accompanied by profound problems of obtaining popular legitimacy" from a largely unsuspecting or even suspicious nation.³

Compounding this problem even further, Radicals, Pacifists, and Socialists, had been organized for well over a decade in opposition to what was known of the Government's secret balance of power diplomacy, which they had condemned as emblematic of the undemocratic and inequalitarian nature of the British political system at best, and at worst, for Keith Robbins, "a powerful reaction against the principles of peace" among

¹ Laurence W. Martin, *Peace without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the British Liberals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 22.

² *Times of London*, February 10, 1914.

³ John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 17-19.

imperialist elites that would ultimately make a major war, and, subsequently, the further subjugation of the wage-earning classes at home, inevitable.⁴

This chapter is primarily concerned with examining the tactics and methodologies employed by both pro-war and dissenting propagandists to harness the all-important force of public opinion, particularly of the working classes, upon the outbreak of the war. As Anne Summers has pointed out, it would be “fundamentally insulting to the working classes [to] suggest that they were as putty in the hands of socialist leaders and/or the propagandists of the governing class” then competing for their allegiance.⁵ Rather, I would suggest that the style and content of the print product of war time propagandists on either side of the “contest of mobilization”⁶ during the early months of the war reflected a new appreciation of the power of public opinion as a formidable force for change made clear to pro-war and pro-peace activists alike by the State’s desperate need of volunteer service at the beginning of the war and the overwhelming number of ‘free-born Britons’ who *chose* to provide it, at the *request* of their government, at least until January 1916.⁷

The political crises generated over the course of the war between what Arno Mayer has termed “the ‘parties of order’ (predominantly the Right) and the ‘parties of movement’ (predominantly the left)” in Britain is, of course, ground well-trodden by historians.⁸ The following discussion seeks to offer a more nuanced consideration of the manner in which British organizations of dissent, in particular the Union of Democratic

⁴ Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), p. 10. And Callaghan, pp. 12-23.

⁵ Anne Summers, “Edwardian Militarism,” in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Routledge, 1988), 236-258, p. 236.

⁶ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 34.

⁷ The Military Service Act, inaugurating Britain’s first full conscription policy, was issued in January 1916.

⁸ Arno J Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1959), p. vii.

Control (UDC) and the Independent Labour Party (ILP), attempted to force a popular and official reckoning with the shortcomings of prewar inter-imperial political economy in Europe as a system through a discussion of its failure not only to prevent a pan-European conflagration, but to uphold the essential principles of democracy and nationality at the heart of British national identity. It is my contention that, in illuminating the fundamental contradictions between the principles of democracy, nationality, and self-determination the war was supposedly being fought to preserve and the practice of inter-imperial balance of power politics that had brought the war to Britain's doorstep, dissenting leaders, perhaps inadvertently, set in motion a popular movement in Britain for the organization of a postwar world in which prewar imperial ideals could not survive.

By the end of the war, the UDC had published some thirty pamphlets and nearly fifty leaflets in addition to the publication of *U.D.C.* weekly magazine with the ILP keeping pace in its own *Labour Leader*, surpassing the UDC with over 70 pamphlets, and leaflets in print between 1914 and 1918.⁹ Certainly, the publications of the UDC and the ILP did not present a monolithic perspective on the causes of the war or vision of post-war Europe. Both organizations deliberately kept their pages and presses open to a broad range of dissenting opinion that they might attract both literary talent and politically undecided supporters into their range of influence.¹⁰ However, the themes introduced by such early critics of the war as Ramsay MacDonald and the ILP's National Council would provide a framework of critique common to nearly all of the war-time publications with the ILP and UDC drawing heavily from both the Labour and Liberal traditions of

⁹ For a list of UDC publications, see Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), Appendix E, pp. 231-234. For the ILP, see Gillian B. Woolven, *Publications of the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1932* (The Society for the Study of Labour History, 1977).

¹⁰ Swartz, p. 63.

domestic or imperial critique while infusing a sense of global connectivity that would come to define the foreign policy of the Labour movement as it developed into an increasingly legitimate party of opposition over the course of the war.

On August 3, 1914, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey addressed the House of Commons to “clear the ground” between the Foreign Office and the Members of Parliament that they might approach the crisis created by Germany’s threat to occupy ‘little Belgium’ as a throughway to France “from the point of view of British interests, British honour, and British obligations, free from all passion as to why peace has not been preserved.”¹¹ The details of exactly how the peace was lost, of which Grey made only scant mention, would have to wait for Asquith’s speech in the House three days later, the morning after war had been declared “in the traditional way,” for John Callaghan, “with no reference to Parliament.”¹² What Grey, somewhat ironically, took pains to convey to that morning, was that “the House of Commons remains perfectly free... to decide... what our line should be,” by which he meant that the Cabinet and Foreign Office had “no secret engagement [to] spring upon the House... [entailing] an obligation of honour upon the country,” nor “construe[d] anything which has previously taken place in our diplomatic relations with other Powers in this matter as restricting the freedom of... the House of Commons to decide... whether we should intervene.”¹³ The outstanding fact of the crisis, he argued, was that, because of her predominant place in the

¹¹ Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in the House of Commons, August 3, 1914 in *War Speeches by British Ministers* (London: T.Fisher Unwin, LTD, 1917), p. 142 and 146.

¹² Callaghan, p. 25.

¹³ Grey, *War Speeches*, p. 143-146.

European balance of power, Britain was obliged to intervene *despite* the absence of any formal agreements or alliances.¹⁴

In elucidating the principles at issue, Grey recalled an earlier crisis involving the preservation of Belgian neutrality against the belligerent wills of France and Germany in the War of 1870. Although, in both cases, the invasion of Belgium would have been a violation of existing inter-imperial accords guaranteeing her sovereignty, Grey clarified with a quote from Gladstone that Britain's historic as well as current "interest in the independence of Belgium... is wider than that which we may have in the literal operation of the guarantee."¹⁵ What made the invasion of Belgium, for Grey as it had been for Gladstone thirty-four years prior, "the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history"¹⁶ was not merely the violation of sovereignty or treaty, but the implications of such "unmeasured aggrandizement of any Power whatever," as Gladstone had phrased it, for the balance of power itself and, subsequently, the future of European security and prosperity.¹⁷ For it was upon the assumption that the balance of power would be maintained, Grey insisted, that the preceding century of European cooperation and prosperity had been built.

In illustrating his point, Grey pointed up the example of France and Britain, "two nations who had had perpetual differences in the past" that had "cleared these differences away" in the name of mutual prosperity through balance of power diplomacy. Secure in

¹⁴ *Times of London*, in an article discussing the 'New Balance of Power' on August 22nd, 1913, described it as an "ancient principle... still held in honour by the Great Powers of Europe" comprising systems of agreements between "partner[s] in an alliance or entente" in which "assistance can be counted upon for the coalition in case of a conflagration... that each member should do the utmost which lies in him to ensure his own independence and freedom of action with his own strength" by defending the integrity of his allies if encroached upon by other Powers.

¹⁵ Grey, *War Speeches*, p. 155.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

the mutual “feeling of confidence and friendship which has existed between the two countries,” Grey argued, Britain and France had largely released their fleets from the costly task of constantly monitoring their shared coastline to undertake the more prosperous duties of expanding their imperial markets and opening new trade routes abroad.¹⁸ “How far that entails an obligation,” Grey stated, “let each man look into his own heart,” but added that

My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet engaged in a war which France had not sought, and in which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes, with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing! I believe that would be the feeling of this country... [and] that it would be a feeling which would spread with irresistible force throughout the land.¹⁹

Even beside this ‘sentimental’ principle of honor, Grey forewarned, the strategic implications of such an act of acquiescence would be dire for Britain’s position in Europe as well, for if

France is beaten in a struggle of life and death, beaten to her knees, loses her position as a great Power, [and] becomes subordinate to the will and power of one greater than herself... and if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence, and then Holland, and then Denmark... I do not believe for a moment that... we should be in a position to... prevent the whole of the West of Europe opposite to us... falling under the domination of a single Power, and I am quite sure that our moral position would be such as to have lost us all respect.²⁰

The threat being posed, for Grey, was not to Belgium or France alone, but to the Anglo-centric balance of power in Europe. In fostering and reaping the benefits of a secure inter-imperial system of global commerce, Britain had also accrued an obligation of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

honour and, indeed, a duty to defend the mutual trust undergirding that balance against its marauding antithesis for the sake of her own national inheritance.²¹

Although Herbert Henry Asquith expressed complete agreement with Grey about Great Britain's responsibilities as a 'Great Power' regarding the inter-imperial balance of power in Europe, the Liberal Prime Minister grounded his own justifications for going to war in far more internationalist and even populist language. In his address to the House the day after war was declared, Asquith coupled Great Britain's obligation to guarantee the sanctity of "solemn international obligations" with that of guaranteeing that "small nationalities are not to be crushed in defiance of international good faith by the arbitrary will of a strong and overmastering Power" as two foundational "principles, the maintenance of which is vital to the civilization of the world." It was with these principles foremost in mind, he reminded the House, that the British government undertook to guarantee the national integrity of Belgium and international security of Europe alike seventy-five years prior with the Treaty of London (1839). The time had come once again, he declared, for the British Empire to not only defend, but even more permanently enshrine these essential principles of human progress as the basis of all future international relations.²²

In a series of well-attended and widely publicized 'call-to-arms' speeches in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and Cardiff given over the first months of the war, Asquith presented the British people with a vision of the war as an apocalyptic struggle between an Anglo-centric "family of nations," bound together by their commitment to "what is

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.148-151.

²² Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith, Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, August 6, 1914 in *War Speeches*, p.7.

properly called the public law of Europe,”²³ and the desire of Germany and her allies to subjugate that family to their own barbaric “Religion of Force” and, thereby, reverse the very progress of democratic civilization.²⁴ Indeed, Belgium was the embodiment of public law, as it would then have been understood, being a long-contested territorial space unable to defend itself against encroachment, but imbued with ‘legal’ sovereignty through inter-imperial treaties as a means of stabilizing the balance of power in Europe.²⁵ Asquith presented this inter-imperial compromise, however, as the enshrinement of a spirit of “free and full self-development which” in Belgium which, he opined, to “small States, to ourselves, to our great and growing Dominions over seas, to our kinsmen across the Atlantic, is the well-spring and life-breath of national existence.” Germany’s invasion of Belgium was not merely criminal, for Asquith, but “the greatest crime against civilization and culture since the Thirty Years War,” because the act explicitly defiled that principle, the Germans having made ‘free development’ “the one capital offense” in their vision of a postwar world under German domination.²⁶ Already, as Asquith spoke in London that September, the German forces were demonstrating their willingness “to sacrifice both the garnered fruits and the potential germs of the unfettered human spirit”²⁷ in the “shameless holocaust of irreparable treasures,” such as the libraries and museums “lit up by blind barbarian vengeance” during the siege of Belgium’s cultural capitals.²⁸

²³ Rt. Hon. H.H. Asquith, Prime Minister, at the Guildhall in London, September 4, 1914, in *War Speeches*, p. 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁵ For a discussion of this topic, see Hannis Taylor, *A Treatise on International Public Law* (Chicago: Callaghan and Company, 1901), pp. 96-97.

²⁶ Asquith, London speech in *War Speeches*, p. 17. Asquith was referring with this statement to the sacking of Louvain specifically. Emphasis added.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17-18. For a discussion of the use of German atrocities against the Belgians as propaganda, see Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 17-33.

Such was only a taste of what was to come, he warned, “a lurid and illuminating... first step... in a deliberate policy of which... the ultimate and not far distant aim was to crush the independence and the autonomy of the Free States of Europe” along the road to global supremacy.²⁹

Against these atrocities, Asquith grounded British war aims in the Gladstonian notion of the “enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea of European politics,” referring to such a goal as being “as good a definition as we can have of our European policy” for the war and postwar world.³⁰ By way of defining ‘public right,’ Asquith stated that,

It means, first and foremost, the clearing of the ground by the definite repudiation of militarism as the governing factor in the relation of States and the future moulding of the European world. It means, next, that room must be found and kept for the independent existence and the free development of the smaller nationalities, each with a corporate consciousness of its own. Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries, Greece, and the Balkan States—that they must be recognized as having exactly as good a title as their more powerful neighbours—more powerful in strength and in wealth—to a place in the sun. And it means finally, or it ought to mean... the substitution for force, for the clash of competing ambitions of a real European partnership based on the recognition of equal rights, and established and enforced by a common will.³¹

Asquith recognized that these aims signified a transition in the course of British and inter-imperial politics. In the near fifty years since Gladstone first called for the ‘enthronement of public right,’ he admitted, “little progress, it seems, has as yet been made towards that great and beneficent change” either abroad or in the metropolitan heart of the Empire.³² Speaking to his Irish constituents in Dublin, Asquith cautiously acknowledged that there had certainly been “wars in the past in regard to which there has been... uneasiness as to

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

³⁰ Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith, Prime Minister, at Dublin, September 25, 1914 in *War Speeches*, p. 40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

the wisdom of our diplomacy... [and] doubts as to the righteousness of our cause.”³³

Even “a year ago,” he admitted, such aims “would have sounded like a Utopian idea.”³⁴

Asquith nevertheless repeatedly gave his assurances of his government’s ‘benevolent disinterest’ in territorial conquest and commitment to the principles of nationality, insisting that, in the decision to take the nation to war, the government was “not impelled, any of us, by some of the motives which have occasioned the bloody struggles of the past... so far as we are concerned ambition and aggression play no part... we do not covet any people’s territory. We have no desire to impose our rule upon alien populations.”³⁵

Asquith stressed that, even in spite of Britain’s past deviations from his principles for the war, the Empire itself stood as “a great, world-wide, peace-loving partnership,” which,

by the wisdom and the courage of our forefathers, by great deeds of heroism and adventure on land and sea, by the insight and corporate sagacity, the tried and tested experience of many generations, [had] built up a dominion which is buttressed by the two pillars of Liberty and Law.³⁶

It was the Empire itself, in fact, that had provided the “greatest evidence” of British commitment to the principles of nationality and democracy for which they now fought.³⁷

From every corner of the Empire, Asquith informed his audiences, Dominion and Protectorate alike had “respon[ded] to our common appeal” with a magnitude and swiftness that had “moved all our feelings to their profoundest depths.”³⁸ Moreover, the

³³ Asquith, Dublin speech in *War Speeches*., p. 36.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41 and 44.

³⁵ Asquith, Cardiff speech in *War Speeches*, p. 47.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁷ Asquith, Dublin speech, *War Speeches*, p. 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

rush to arms of these “children of the Empire” were undertaken “not as an obligation, but as a privilege, [to exercise] their right... to contribute money, material, and, what is better than all, the strength and sinews, the fortunes, and lives of their best manhood.”³⁹ Even from India, he noted, “every class and creed, British and native, princes and people, Hindoos and Mohammedans, vie with one another in a noble and emulous rivalry” in their rush to the colors.⁴⁰

Across the United Kingdom, Asquith repeatedly offered up the imagery of “our magnificent Indian Army... [fighting] side by side and shoulder to shoulder with our home and Dominion troops” under the same flag and for the same principles in lands equally foreign to both as “a symbol to all of a unity that the world in arms cannot dissever or dissolve,” asking “with these inspiring appeals and examples from our fellow-subjects all over the world, what are we doing, and what ought we to do at home?”⁴¹ The imagery of the Indian soldier seeming to best the British citizen in the zeal of his imperial patriotism was obviously meant to arouse a spirit of competition along with a sense of national honor to represent British courage and patriotism on the field.⁴² It also served to vindicate the ‘civilizing mission’ itself, however, proving that, even to the mind of the colonized British subject, “whatever [the Empire had] won by the sword we hold and we retain by the more splendid title of just and disinterested rule, by the authority, not of a despot, but of a trustee.”⁴³

³⁹ Asquith, Guildhall speech, *War Aims*, p. 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Also in *War Speeches*, see Asquith’s speech in Edinburgh on September 18, p. 30, his speech in Dublin, p. 42, and in Cardiff, p. 46.

⁴² For a discussion of British reactions to the Government’s appeals to their sense of patriotism, see David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916* (London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 104-124.

⁴³ Asquith, Dublin speech in *War Speeches*, p. 46.

At the heart of declarations was the idea that, despite its shortcomings, the British Empire was a powerful, perhaps the most powerful, force for the progress of democratic civilization in the world and that, if an Allied victory were to be achieved, the ideals of the Empire's domestic and imperial 'civilizing mission' would be ultimately realized, and vindicated, in the crucible of the war through the shedding of British blood. Never before in its history had British Empire, he declared, been more akin to a family of nations, "without distinction of creed or party, of race or climate, of class or section... united in defending principles and in maintaining interests which are vital, not only to the British Empire, but to all that is worth having in our common civilization, and all that is worth hoping for in the future progress of mankind."⁴⁴ For the justness and righteousness of the British cause in the war were anchored in the same principles as the 'civilizing mission,' the war aims he offered being, at bottom, merely a broadening of that mission to include protecting and providing for the advancement of weaker peoples even beyond the borders of the Empire itself.⁴⁵ However contradictory such a mission might seem to the enemy, Asquith asserted, it had become "proposition which British citizens in every part of the world to-day regard as beyond the reach of controversy."⁴⁶ Moreover, he promised, "if and when this War is decided in favour of the Allies it will at once come within the range, and before long within the grasp, of European statesmen."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of perspectives on the civilizing mission, see Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Decolonization," *Journal of World History* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2004), pp. 1-4.

⁴⁶ Asquith, *War Speeches*, p. 46. M.L. Sanders and P.M. Taylor have argued for the importance of this theme in British propaganda, noting the Wellington House publication of a series of pamphlets dedicated to the subject beginning just after the beginning of the war. Michael L Sanders and Philip M Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War, 1914-18* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 152-3.

⁴⁷ Asquith, Dublin speech in *War Speeches*, p. 41 and 44.

The earliest and, certainly, the most provocative voice of dissent over British intervention came from Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) Ramsay MacDonald. Immediately following Grey's speech to the House, MacDonald condemned Grey's duplicitous appeals to British national honour for what, to his mind, was clearly a war for the balance of inter-imperial power as the true crime being committed. MacDonald assured the House that every member of his party would eagerly pledge their support to any statesmen, regardless of party or class, who could prove a legitimate threat to Britain's national integrity or honor. Indeed, even coming to the rescue of "a small European nationality like Belgium" endangered by the aggression of a greater power would be a noble cause to the mind of Labour. For MacDonald, however, such claims were nothing more than a smoke screen meant to obscure the fact that British subjects were being called forth to support Russia, the most 'earth-hungry' power in the world, "in a European war which is not going to leave the map of Europe where it is now" regardless of the victor. Citing the last British intervention in a Russian conflict over the balance of power and the recent struggles to suppress the 'rights of small nations' in Africa, MacDonald declared that

there has been no crime committed by statesmen of [Grey's] character without those statesmen appealing to the nation's honour. We fought the Crimean War because of our honour. We rushed to South Africa because of our honour. The right hon. gentleman is appealing to us to-day in the cause of our honour.

MacDonald similarly found the notion that, if Britain remained neutral in the conflict, "we are going to have the power of civilization and the genius of France removed from European history... another absolutely impossible conception" that could "never justify the action which the right hon. gentleman has foreshadowed." For those familiar with

such tactics, MacDonald argued, Grey's pretensions amounted to little more than diplomatic alibis for reckless diplomacy and the all too familiar cant of jingoistic patriotism, neither of which held any appeal for him or his Party. "When his speech gets into cold print tomorrow," MacDonald assured the House, "he will not persuade a large section of the country" either.⁴⁸

The appeal of the Asquith administration's war rhetoric would far exceed anything MacDonald could have imagined, however. Within a week of his speech, 8,193 volunteers enlisted, followed by an additional 43,764 by the end of its first week, and yet another 49,982 by the end of its third, a great many of which were working class members of the Trade Unions and constituents of the Labour Party.⁴⁹ When even a majority of MacDonald's own Party were converted not only to the vigorous prosecution of the war, but a political truce in which disputes over domestic issues were to be put aside for the duration of the war, MacDonald chose to resign his chair, rather than his principles.⁵⁰ Passing the mantle of parliamentary leadership of the labour movement to Party Secretary Arthur Henderson the next day, MacDonald entered a new phase of his political career as a figurehead of the dissenting left and a traitorous political pariah for the pro-war right.⁵¹

It was no coincidence that MacDonald's first statements in print about the decision to intervene in the conflict appeared in the pages of the *Labour Leader*, the official weekly of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Originally organized as a political arm of the Trade Union Councils in the 1870's, the ILP had retained its radical

⁴⁸ *Manchester Guardian and Times of London*, August 4, 1914

⁴⁹ Silbey, pp. 22, 47, and 64.

⁵⁰ Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party: 1910-1924* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 90-91.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii and 1-8.

platform for social and political reform even as the more conformist Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) that evolved from it became the official voice of the Labour movement in Parliament. The ILP's vehement opposition to British intervention in the conflict would cost them more than a third (some ten thousand) of their working-class members⁵² and the ousting of their leaders from the Trade Unions.⁵³ Nevertheless, the ILP's long history of opposition to the kind of reckless imperialistic and anti-democratic foreign policy practices that, they argued, had made the war inevitable would make the ILP a "ready-made organizational home," according to Arno Mayer, for such dissenting voices as MacDonald's.⁵⁴ MacDonald's resignation from the PLP would also be a watershed for Labour's radical left, according to Robert Dowse, signifying the ILP's transition from the shadow of the PLP to "the most important party in opposition to the Government's war policy" as such luminaries as MacDonald, already a longstanding and influential member of the ILP, fell back on it as an organizational platform.⁵⁵ The *Labour Leader* provided the early voices of dissent with a public forum as well as a crucible in which their initial arguments against going to war would be refined into a critique of the belligerent nature of the European system of inter-imperial political economy as a whole.

On August 13, 1914, the *Labour Leader* led with the "Manifesto of the National Council of the Independent Labour Party" on the war on the front page followed immediately by MacDonald's "Why We are at War: A Reply to Sir Edward Grey." In refuting Grey's logic of intervention, both pieces stressed the anti-democratic nature of

⁵² see Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party, 1914-1931* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), p. 9.

⁵³ McKibbin, pp. 90-91.

⁵⁴ Mayer, pp. 40, 46-47.

⁵⁵ Robert Edward Dowse, *Left in the Centre; the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1940*, (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 20.

British foreign policy for its imperialistic aims as well as the authoritarian manner in which it was made. In this sense, from its earliest expression, opposition to the war was cast as a critique of the incompatibility of imperialism and democracy that would characterize the dissenting press campaign to come for the duration of the war and beyond.

True to its *raison d'être* of giving a political voice to the domestic grievances of the working classes, the ILP opened its manifesto with the critique that British "Diplomacy has been underground, secret, deceitful" and practiced "behind the back of Parliament and people." Free from the hindering influence of democracy, "Diplomatists" suffered no accountability in forging the sort of "secret understandings" that had generated the war and simply "den[ied] their existence when challenged" by the people. In the total absence of accountability, it was no wonder that the nations had been "stampeded by fear and panic" into uniform "through the influence of its Jingo Press," each erroneously believing it was fighting a defensive war for its own national survival.⁵⁶

The ILP characterized and critiqued the conflict itself in explicitly imperial terms. At bottom, the war was a contest over imperial aggrandizement between Germany and Russia in which "Britain has placed herself behind Russia, the most reactionary, corrupt, and oppressive Power in Europe." In so doing, Britain was not only permitting, but enabling Russia "to gratify her territorial ambitions and extend her Cossack rule... gravely imperil[ing]... civilization and democracy." Anti-democratic in their aims as well as the manner in which they were forged, such alliances of imperial interest were also brutally indifferent to the suffering they brought to their peoples and particularly

⁵⁶ The Independent Labour Party, "The I.L.P. and the War: The Manifesto of the National Council of the Independent Labour Party," *Labour Leader*, August 13th, 1914. *ILP/5/1914/74*, *LSE*

their working classes “who go to kill and be killed at the command of rulers to whom the people are pawns” in what amounted to their “organized murder.”⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the conflagration presented the democracies of Europe with an opportunity to learn from the errors of their statesmen and correct the imbalances of their systems of government at war’s end. “In forcing this appalling crime upon the nations,” the ILP insisted,

it is the rulers, the diplomats, the militarists who have sealed their doom. In tears and blood and bitterness, the greater Democracy will be born... our cause is holy and imperishable... the nation must now watch for the first opportunity for effective intervention... [and] must begin to prepare our minds for the difficult and dangerous complications that will arise at the conclusion of the war. The People must everywhere resist such territorial aggression and national abasement as will pave the way for fresh wars... press for frank and honest diplomatic policies, controlled by themselves, for the suppression of militarism and the establishment of the United States of Europe, thereby advancing toward the world’s peace.⁵⁸

In his formal “Reply to Sir Edward Grey” in the pages following the ILP’s manifesto, MacDonald expanded on its themes with a knowledge of foreign policy making to which his chairmanship in the PLP had made him privy.

For MacDonald, the “policy of the balance of power” depicted by Grey as grounded in ‘mutual feelings of confidence and friendship’ had, in fact, long been characterized by mutual suspicion, hostile rivalries, secret alliances, and the accumulation of armaments in anticipation of the inevitable “smashing up of the very balance which it is designed to maintain.” Since 1905, MacDonald illustrated, Grey had made a deliberate choice in forging political *ententes* around the principle of “tipping the balance of power

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

against [Germany]” in spite of the dangers of inter-imperial war it obviously portended.⁵⁹ Grey’s preference for managing Britain’s foreign relations through *ententes*, or ‘understandings’ (“the worst form of alliance,” for MacDonald), was a tactical one: “An alliance is definite. Everyone knows his responsibilities under it. The *entente* deceives the people.” Through the *entente* tactic, Grey was able to avoid any domestic accountability or formal obligation in executing his diplomatic plot to harness the political and military power of France and Russia to check the growth of an emergent Germany. Grey’s claim in the House that the British had contracted no formal obligations was therefore, for MacDonald, “literally true but substantially untrue.” Although comprising no formal obligations, the Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian Ententes of 1904 and 1907 respectively, MacDonald illustrated, had literally “force[d] Germany to fight” by 1914 and left Britain “so helplessly committed to fight for France and Russia that Grey had to refuse point blank every overture made by Germany to keep us out of the conflict.” No doubt, MacDonald admitted, “taking a narrow view... Germany’s share is a heavy one... she, with Russia, is mainly responsible for the war; taking a longer view, we are equally responsible.”⁶⁰

Unsurprisingly, MacDonald’s loyalties were debated in newspapers all over Britain as his article was reproduced in leaflet form and circulated throughout the country.⁶¹ When the German Chancellor stated to the Danish Press that Grey had deliberately used Belgium as an excuse to make war on Germany a few weeks later, for

⁵⁹ Ramsay MacDonald, “Why we are at War: A Reply to Sir Edward Grey,” *Labour Leader* August 13th, 1914. For a discussion of Grey’s “pro-French and ultimately anti-German policy” as well as organized opposition to those policies, see John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict, 1915-1918*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 46-47.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London: J. Cape, 1977), p. 186.

example, the *Times* claimed that he had merely “followed the lead given to him by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald... in an article published by him in the *Labour Leader*.”⁶²

According to his biographers, MacDonald’s position on the war sparked a newspaper campaign against him of such “extraordinary savagery”⁶³ as to cast MacDonald “in the role of national traitor for the duration” of the war⁶⁴ and, at least initially, frighten off many who might have agreed with or even supported him from Liberal and Labour camps alike.⁶⁵

MacDonald’s was merely a “temporary political eclipse,” however, and certainly one in which he, the ILP, and the dissenting voices soon to emerge throughout the British Isles would experience alone. As Arno Mayer has shown, the outbreak of war signified a domestic victory for “the old ruling classes” at the head of the political right across Europe, who “achieved a position of power to which they had aspired only in their most daring dreams before the war” as the vast majority of Conservatives, Liberals, and even Labourites got behind their Governments’ efforts to stabilize the balance of power in Europe in their favor and that of their allies.⁶⁶ For the remaining voices of dissent, however, the outbreak of war offered a clearer view of the global impact of the ‘real enemy inside the gates,’ inspiring a far more extensive and public critique of British foreign policy and its domestic implications than ever before undertaken by Liberal, Radical, or Labour minded Britons. As the vying military forces of Europe settled into

⁶² *Times of London*, September 17, 1914.

⁶³ Marquand, p. 186. And Swartz, p. 32.

⁶⁴ Austen Morgan, *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 60. See also Marquand, Ch. 2 entitled “Public Enemy” pp. 186-206; Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914-1918*, (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996), pp. 53-59; Helena Maria Swanwick, *Builders of Peace: Being Ten Years' History of the Union of Democratic Control* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1973), pp. 89-106; Dowse, pp. 22-23; and Swartz, p. 33.

⁶⁵ Swartz, p. 32.

⁶⁶ Mayer, p. 14.

their prolonged melee, so too did their political representatives into new alliances largely defined by their perspectives on the causes, consequences, and potential opportunities of the war. In Britain, as elsewhere, the dictum that ‘war is politics continued by other means’ also held true of these war-forged alliances, with dissident and pro-war propaganda alike drawing from their political legacies to defend positions taken during the war and visions for the postwar world.

Those who stood in opposition to Grey’s proposed intervention in the crisis did so for a variety of reasons, from a principled socialist or pacifist objection to war to a personal hatred for Grey and his approach to foreign policy making. Nevertheless, dissenters tended to share much in common in terms of political principles and aims, with most coming from the Liberal and Labourite left with a background in activism for social and political reform. The extreme political marginalization of the dissenting left also tended to encourage solidarity across lines of party and principle, a trend reflected in the popular perception of dissenters and their political ideas as a unified and homogenous movement. Although ‘dissenting opinion’ began and would largely remain a mosaic of voices and ideas about the war and the British political system as a whole, as Sally Harris has shown, collective action did foster an “interpenetration of the foreign-policy doctrines and ideologies of Britain’s Radicals, and Independent Socialists” palpable in their wartime and postwar propaganda.⁶⁷ Catherine Ann Cline has similarly shown that the organizational centers of dissent would also serve as important conductors of political power, traveling during this period from a Liberal Party in decline into a Labour

⁶⁷ Harris, p. 125.

movement only just coming into its own as a legitimate party of opposition.⁶⁸ Perhaps the most significant conductors of that power during the war were the ILP and its 'sister center' of British dissent, the Union of Democratic Control (UDC).

The brainchild of Liberal MP for Ellen Charles Philips Trevelyan, the UDC was originally conceived as a pressure group to limit the degree of British intervention in the early hours of the war. Founder of the National Peace Council (NPC) and Congo Reform Association (CRA) in 1904 and the British Neutrality Committee (BNC) on the eve of the war, Trevelyan had been an outspoken opponent of Grey's approach to foreign policy making for sometime. Upon the declaration of war, Trevelyan immediately sounded the views of journalist and co-founder of the CRA, Edmund Dene Morel and Liberal MP for Stirling Burghs Arthur Ponsonby, both of whom had been among the most vehement critics of Grey and the Foreign Office generally in the years leading up to the war. By the war's second week, these men had formed the UDC as a means not to stop the war, an aim its leaders quickly recognized as futile, but rather to force a popular reckoning with the failures of the prewar political system that had generated it and to use the peace as a platform for political reform at the national, imperial, and inter-imperial levels.⁶⁹

As the organization's name and the political tendencies of its founders suggested, the primary shortcoming of the prewar system of government, as well as the mainspring of the war, was the absence of democratic control, or even oversight, in the making of foreign policy in Europe.⁷⁰ It followed, then, that the first step toward brokering real change at the inter-imperial level was to mobilize the British public in the name of

⁶⁸ Cline, pp. 4 and 129; For a discussion considering the benefits and drawbacks of UDC and ILP collaboration, see Dowse, pp. 24-34. Also see Keith Laybourn, "The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate," *History* 80, no. 259 (1995): pp. 207-226.

⁶⁹ For an account of the UDC's formation from an early member, see Swanwick, pp. 29-37.

⁷⁰ For a detailed discussion of the political backgrounds of the founders of the UDC, see Swartz, Prologue.

democratizing the Foreign Office at home, the last preserve of total ruling class autonomy in the British government.⁷¹ Although UDC leaders maintained their faith in the pacifistic tendencies of the people as a democratic body, there were nevertheless alive to the fact that, in seeking to mobilize the British public, they were “swimming against one of the strongest and fiercest tides of opinion in recent British history,” as one commentator described the unprecedented popular support for the war effort in Britain.⁷² E.D. Morel in particular was acutely aware of the necessity of capturing the “sheer weight in numbers needed to win battles in the field of mass politics,” not to mention the political and propaganda infrastructure, that only the support of the Labour movement could provide.⁷³ It was for these reasons in the main, according to Marvin Swartz, that UDC leaders welcomed Ramsay MacDonald into their inner circle and, through him, took the UDC into a close partnership with the ILP for the duration of the war.⁷⁴

The alignment of the Liberal-heavy UDC and the staunchly socialist ILP was by no means seamless, however. As Keith Robbins has pointed out, influential ILP leaders like Bruce Glazier and outspoken socialist writers like Alfred Slater objected that the force of the ILP’s voice for revolutionary change in the global system of capitalist imperialism would be diluted by its identification with the UDC’s focus on foreign policy reforms and the immediate causes of the war.⁷⁵ Similarly, Labour’s ‘clean hands’ in the war and its relative political independence, the movement’s “chief appeal” for disenchanted Liberals, according to Cline, would in turn be diffused with each Liberal

⁷¹ This view of the Foreign Office in relation to the government as a whole was a central theme for the UDC, see Arthur Ponsonby, *Parliament and Foreign Policy* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915).

⁷² Marquand, p. 184.

⁷³ Swartz, pp. 58-62 and Mayer, pp. 44-46.

⁷⁴ Swartz, Ch. 2, especially pp. 58-62.

⁷⁵ Robbins, p. 65.

recruit.⁷⁶ Robbins and Cline also agree on the reluctance of UDC Liberals to actually join the ILP, let alone identify themselves as socialists. Even those disenchanted Liberals that did directly identify themselves with the ILP, for Cline, “seem for the most part to have accepted rather than embraced [the] central doctrine of their new party.”⁷⁷

Nevertheless, there is an historical consensus that the relationship between the UDC and the ILP during the war provided a crucial pathway from Liberalism to Labour and, thus, to the eventual empowerment of Labour as the main party of opposition after the war.⁷⁸ Largely as a result of the tireless campaigning of E.D. Morel, the number of Labour organizations affiliated with the ILP and, through it, the UDC, would double by the end of 1915.⁷⁹ In its turn, all eleven members of the UDC’s Executive Committee would eventually join the Labour Party, in addition to the many Liberal recruits they brought with them.⁸⁰ Although they began the war from the political margins, the collaborative efforts of the UDC and the ILP to re-imagine Labour as a legitimate party of opposition to the government played no small role in nearly doubling the overall affiliated membership of the Labour movement by the end of the war.⁸¹ It follows, in the view of this writer, that the hybrid political platform of domestic and foreign policy reform evident in the shared propaganda campaign undertaken by the UDC and ILP⁸² would have a lasting impact on the constituency it was designed to mobilize throughout

⁷⁶ Cline, p. 4.

⁷⁷ Cline, p. 129 and Robbins, p. 64.

⁷⁸ Harris, pp. 125, Douse, pp. 24-34, Mayer, pp. 44-58, Robbins, p. 62 and 64-65, Henry R. Winkler, *Paths Not Taken: British Labour and International Policy in the 1920's*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina, 1994), pp. 1-6; Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 1-4.

⁷⁹ Robbins, p. 62 and 64-65.

⁸⁰ Mayer, p. 49.

⁸¹ Worley, pp. 1-4.

⁸² For some discussion of this dualistic platform, see Mayer, 44-58.

the British Isles as well as the dissenting leaders who would lead Labour twice into government within a decade of the war's end.

Although dissenting writers would remain firm in their conviction that the government's role in generating the war and its aims for prosecuting it had been misrepresented to the British public, the founders of the UDC nevertheless emphasized in their first public statement that, "there is no question of this association embodying a 'stop-the-war' movement of any kind." Rather, they declared in a letter to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian* on September 18, 1914,

the whole emphasis of our effort is laid upon indicating clearly the fundamental principles which must mark the final terms of peace if the general policies for which the present Government presumably stands, and which nearly all writers, certainly all progressive writers, have from the beginning urged, is finally to be vindicated.⁸³

As if to demonstrate the uniformity of principles between the dissenting left, the government, and the British people suggested by this statement, the founders identified First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill as "the first member of the Government to furnish the broad lines of the settlement" in warning days earlier against the dangers of "disregarding the principle of nationality and in rearranging frontiers without regard to the wishes of the populations concerned" at the peace.⁸⁴ They then translated Churchill's sentiment into the UDC's first Cardinal Point for the peace that "No province shall be

⁸³ *Manchester Guardian*, September 18, 1914.

⁸⁴ The letter was referring to a recent speech given by Churchill on the government's aims for the war published in the *Times of London* on September 12, 1914.

transferred from one Government to another without the consent by plebiscite of the population of such province.”⁸⁵

Far from the claim of solidarity the UDC’s identification of Churchill’s aim for the war with their own seemed to make, however, the reference to his recent speech was, in fact, an indictment of its duplicity. The founders implied as much by suggesting in their letter that “it is unlikely that this aim will be realized unless behind the statesmen there is the push of a well-defined public opinion.”⁸⁶ As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the early decision to place the interdiction of coercive territorial transfer at the center of the UDC’s ‘peace aims’ and to specifically identify that aim as equally central to the war aims for which the Asquith administration had called the British people to arms was a crucial tactic for dissenting propagandists designed to undermine as far as possible the popular faith in British ‘imperial democracy’ as a legitimate institution of government.⁸⁷

In *The Morrow of War* (1914), the UDC established the fifteen to twenty page pamphlet as its primary publication form and offered in full its statement of purpose beginning with the Four Cardinal Points. The Points, which would thereafter appear on the inside cover of every UDC publication, read as follows:

(1) No province shall be transferred from one Government to another without the consent, by plebiscite or otherwise, of the population of such province.

⁸⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, September 18, 1914.

⁸⁶ The letter was referring to a recent speech given by Churchill on the government’s aims for the war published in the *Times of London* on September 12, 1914.

⁸⁷ I am borrowing the term ‘imperial democracy’ from Andrew Gordon to describe a government or a perspective on government in which the potentially contradictory goals of national democracy and imperial sovereignty coexist in a state of constant play in which one or the other predominates depending on the context or demands made upon the institution or statesmen in the moment. See Andrew Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (University of California Press, 1992), p. 7-10.

(2) No treaty, arrangement, or undertaking shall be entered in the name of Great Britain without the sanction of Parliament. Adequate machinery for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy shall be created.

(3) The foreign policy of Great Britain shall not be aimed at creating alliances for the purpose of maintaining the “balance of power,” but shall be directed to the establishment of a Concert of Europe, whose deliberations and decisions shall be public.

(4) Great Britain shall propose as part of the peace settlement a plan for the drastic reduction of the armaments by the consent of all the belligerent Powers, and to facilitate that policy shall attempt to secure the general nationalization of the manufacture of armaments, and the control of the export of armaments by one country to another.

Phrased like an abbreviated Decalogue of political practices to be forbidden in the postwar world, the Cardinal Points clearly reflected, as Harris has shown, the personal views of UDC founders on specific shortcomings of prewar inter-imperial and domestic politics.⁸⁸ The Points also shared two other common characteristics, however, that have been largely overlooked by historians. First, every one of the Points practically mirrored the lofty aims and justifications for the war offered by Asquith and Grey in their widely publicized speeches and reiterated by statesmen like Churchill thereafter as the government’s ‘national policy’ for the war. Second, the negatively framed Points all targeted crucial pillars of the centuries-old British policy of containing inter-imperial rivalry through ‘balance of power diplomacy’ that, for dissenting writers, had made the outbreak of war inevitable.

That these two characteristics seem utterly contradictory, I argue, was precisely the point. As MacDonald illustrated in the UDC pamphlet *War and the Workers* (1914), although dissenting writers would largely appropriate the language of ‘Asquithain’ aims

⁸⁸ For a discussion of the points in relation to the specific interests of the UDC founders, see Harris, pp. 47-68.

for the war in their ‘peace aims,’ they uniformly believed that, if left to the whims of statesmen alone,

all the blessings to Europe which were talked about on public platforms at the commencement of the war... of course, will not be realized, some of them because they cannot be realized by any war, and others because they are as objectionable to Russia as ever they have been to Germany and Austria and are therefore not likely to come from the defeat of these two Powers alone.⁸⁹

More importantly, however, dissenting writers viewed Asquith’s aims for the war as incompatible with fundamental precepts of British domestic, imperial, and foreign policy traditions. By mobilizing the British public in support of Asquith’s principles recast as UDC aims for the peace, I argue, dissenting leaders aimed not only to deflect some of the opprobrium of the overwhelmingly pro-war British public, but to channel it back toward the government itself as the Asquith administration failed to meet the lofty expectations Asquith himself had set over the course of the conflict. That this was the intention of UDC founders from the beginning was made clear in their first two institutional publications, *The Morrow of War* and *The National Policy* (1914).⁹⁰

At the heart of the first Point dealing with territorial transfer, *The National Policy* argued, was the “principle of nationality” given so much emphasis by Asquith in his calls to arms, but more succinctly defined in the recent speech of Churchill as “the setting free of those races which have been subjected and conquered” and the settling of the “ultimate destination” of “disputed areas of country... with a fair regard to the wishes and feelings of the people who live in them.” With Churchill, the UDC agreed that the principle of nationality should be “the first of these... great and sound principles for the European

⁸⁹ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *War and the Workers* (Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 4. *Morel F13/6/1*, LSE

⁹⁰ Although four pamphlets were published between *The Morrow of War* and *The National Policy*, those two were the first to be published as the views of the UDC and not attributed to a specific author by name.

system... which we should keep before us.”⁹¹ The authors then expanded on the point, using the lofty statements of British statesmen to prove that “the absolute need for recognizing the principle of nationality and the consent of the governed and of abandoning the attempt to hold provinces acquired by conquest against their consent... is recognized among the members of the Cabinet.” Moreover, they argued, the centrality of the principle of nationality for both the pro-war and the pro-peace movements demonstrated a “remarkable unanimity as to the general policy” which “Ministers, ex-Ministers, leaders of all parties, men eminent in thought and literature, the great newspapers... consider England to be pursuing in the present war... [that was] also remarkably [coincident] with the general policy of the Union of Democratic Control.”⁹²

Similarly, the spirit of the third Cardinal Point of abandoning balance of power alliances and diplomacy in favor of a democratic and transparent International Council was also presented as common cause for the government and its putative opposition. *The National Policy* quoted with praise Grey’s early commitment to “promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately,” as indicating both openly and “very plainly not only the circumstances under which the war arose, but what must be the future of British policy if a recurrence of the present catastrophe is to be prevented.”⁹³ Similarly, Asquith had also defined his conception of the ‘public right’ as including “the substitution for... the clash of competing ambitions... of a real European partnership based on the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3. For a full reproduction of the speech, see *Times of London*, September 12, 1914.

⁹² Union of Democratic Control, *The National Policy*, (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 1-2. *Morel/F13/6/1*, LSE.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

recognition of equal right and established and enforced by the common will.”⁹⁴ Such a view was even more forcefully expressed, it was suggested, by former Prime Minister A.J. Balfour in stating that “the international future of our race lay in as far as possible spreading wide the grip and power of International Law” and that the “controversies which arose between Governments... should be decided not by the sword but by arbitration.”⁹⁵

The necessity of a policy of enforced disarmament expressed in the fourth Point was also dear, according to *The National Policy*, to former Prime Minister Archibald Primrose, then Lord Rosbery, who seemed to echo the ILP’s manifesto on the war in recently warning, if retrospectively, that “When... you go on building up armaments against each other, there comes a time when either the guns go off of themselves or else the people say, ‘we can no longer bear this burden of suspense. We had better make an end of it and come to blows at once’.”⁹⁶ Asquith himself, noted *The National Policy*, had specifically designated the first task of a European political system founded on the notion of the ‘public right’ as being “the clearing of the ground by the definite repudiation of militarism as the governing factor in the relation of States and of the future moulding of the European world.”⁹⁷

The UDC’s second Point of demanding the democratization of foreign policy making in Great Britain was, tellingly, given far less emphasis than the other Points in *The National Policy*. The authors demonstrated the official recognition of a need for

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

democratic reform with a quote from former Chancellor of the Exchequer Austen Chamberlain, who had recently commented that

I don't know why this is, but in the most democratic of countries, our people have been told less of foreign politics... than has been the custom in all great Continental nations... it has been a tradition handed down, I think, from older days, when less dependent upon the voice of the people, and, as I think, not suited to the circumstances of to-day.⁹⁸

It was for this reason, the authors argued, that the UDC so strongly “urge[d] the formation of a deliberate and conscious public opinion... to enforce those ideals” at the peace, for

We do not know what the circumstances of the peace may be. We cannot estimate the diplomatic or class pressure which may be brought, even by our own Allies to influence the decision in some selfish or unwise direction... Otherwise it may be that there will be only a partial and one-sided application of those principles... [in which some] may find their nationality considered... [while others] may have no security given them that their national existence will be respected.⁹⁹

The passive tone of these sections of *The National Policy* did indeed reflect, as Harris and Swartz have suggested, the sensitivity of UDC founders to the surge in patriotic feelings that accompanied the war and their fear of alienating potential liberal and working class supporters with overly critical language of the Asquith administration or the war effort.¹⁰⁰ That being said, the ‘Asquithian’ language of *The National Policy* also performed the more subtle work of establishing a touchstone for the government’s war aims against which its policy could be measured in the future. Viewed along side the more directly critical language of *The Morrow of War*, the tactic of setting the stage for the

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Within a few weeks of the war’s outbreak, for example, Ramsay MacDonald offered to resign from the UDC to avoid rendering it ineffective merely by his association with it. For a discussion of the threat of dissent to traditional leftist movements in Europe, see Mayer, pp. 8-1-14. For a consideration of this by the UDC, see Harris, pp. 56-59 and Swartz, p. 32.

government's failure to live up to its own aims in *The National Policy* becomes far clearer.

As *The Morrow of War* declared in its closing paragraphs, the UDC stood on the assumption that the aims for the war espoused by the government, accepted by its opposition, and championed by the British people

cannot be attained until the constitutionally governed democracies of the West are brought to realize how impossible it is that their moral and spiritual development and their happiness and well-being can be secured under a system of government which leaves them at the mercy of the intrigues and imbecilities of professional diplomatists and of the ambitions of military casts... [and] private interest dependent for its profits upon the maintenance of that 'armed peace' which is the inevitable prelude to the carnage and futility of war.¹⁰¹

There was no question, the authors argued, that, if clearly understood, the anti-democratic manner in which British statesmen had generated the war would persuade "any man of ordinary intelligence," not only that Asquith's aims for the war were nothing more than a bald deception, but that the very "system of Government under which we live is not a democratic system, but its antithesis."¹⁰²

Beginning with the first Point, *The Morrow of War* stressed the centrality of coercive territorial transfer as the life-blood of the prewar inter-imperial system. Arguing the simple logic that, "if no province were retained under a Government's power against the will of its inhabitants, the policy of conquest and the imposition of political power would lose its *raison d'être*," the authors explained that the Point had been "placed first because if adhered to practically and in spirit, and if recognized by the European Powers as a principle that must guide all frontier arrangements, it would help to put an end to

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰² Union of Democratic Control, *The Morrow of War* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 6. *Morel/F13/6/1, LSE.*

European war.”¹⁰³ The great difficulty of enforcing the first Point lay in the logic undergirding the second. As territorial transfer became increasingly central to inter-imperial diplomacy over the final decades of the nineteenth-century, the Foreign Office, already the closed preserve of aristocratic power in the British government,¹⁰⁴ had become impenetrably autocratic. Not only had the British public been “treated as though foreign affairs were outside—and properly outside—its ken,” they argued, but the Foreign Office itself had gradually eliminated any form of public access or oversight to the point that even Parliamentary inquiry had become “so restricted as to be perfunctory.”¹⁰⁵ The result of this trend had been the enthronement of ‘balance of power diplomacy’ addressed by the third Point. For although the principle of the balance was meant to prevent any one power from acquiring a predominant position in Europe, its practice had rendered “the public... the sport of private ambitions and interests, of personal prejudices and obscure passions, which it can neither detect nor control, and, for the most part, does not even suspect.”¹⁰⁶ As a consequence, Europe had become nothing less than a field of armed camps with each power “withdraw[ing] from the constructive work of the world, to prepare for the world’s destruction.”¹⁰⁷ The time had come, the authors argued, for the British people to realize that “the domestic concerns of the nation, its constitutional liberties, its social reforms, all its internal activities in short, depend upon the preservation of peaceful relations with its neighbours... [and] to insist upon... some mechanical means whereby a greater national control of foreign policy can be

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ The so called ‘income test’ required all candidates for the Foreign Office to have an income of at least £400 a year.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4 and 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6 and 7.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

secured.”¹⁰⁸ It was “to awaken these sentiments among the democracies of this and other countries,” they declared, that the UDC had been formed.¹⁰⁹

In the ILP’s leaflet *The Truth about the War* (1914), ILP secretary Francis Johnson encouraged all members to purchase their own copies of the *Labour Leader* and to encourage as many other people as they could to do the same. In addition to supporting their party, Johnson explained, the proliferation of its publications was meant to counteract the efforts of statesmen and the pro-war press to ‘bewilder’ the man in the street with their audacious claim that the war was “a ‘Just,’ a ‘Righteous,’ and a ‘Holy’ one” while keeping from him any “real facts about the war and the causes which led to our being involved in it.” It was crucial that members of the ILP “be well supplied with facts and arguments... given week by week with fullness and accuracy in the *Labour Leader*,” if the pro-war campaign of misinformation and official secrecy was to be broken.¹¹⁰

In keeping with the *Labour Leader*’s promise, UDC and ILP writers spent the next eighteen months systematically deconstructing more than half a century of inter-imperial diplomacy for their readers in complimenting and overlapping pamphlets, leaflets, and articles in an attempt to expose Asquith’s ‘war for the rights of small nations’ as an inter-imperial war for the balance of power. The value of this campaign for understanding the position of dissenting writers on British ‘war-guilt’ and the state of British democracy has already been illustrated by other historians. I will take a different

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4 and 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ Independent Labour Party, *The Truth About the War* (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1914). ILP/5/1914/72, LSE

approach in foregrounding the theme of the incompatibility of imperial interest and the principle of democracy embedded in much of the print product of the dissenting left dealing with the origins of the war.

The road to war, for most dissenting writers, began not with the assassination of the Archduke in Sarajevo in 1914, but rather with the signature of the Anglo-French Entente-cordiale nearly a decade prior.¹¹¹ In addition to settling standing disputes between the French and British governments over spheres of influence in Newfoundland, Central and West Africa, and Siam, the Entente of 1904 gave formal British recognition of French predominance in Morocco in exchange for that of France for British predominance in Egypt. When tensions between France and Germany in Morocco resulting from the Entente brought Britain to the brink of war in 1911, E.D. Morel published a detailed history of the 'Agadir Crisis' called *Morocco in Diplomacy* (1912), in which he emphasized the intimate connection between government policies that flouted the principles of democracy, nationality, and free development abroad and the anti-democratic manner in which those policies were made and sustained at home, even in the face of war.¹¹² When the Great War then averted finally came, Morel brought his study up to date with the UDC pamphlet *Morocco and Armageddon* (1915).

Like Belgium, Morel pointed out, the independence of Morocco had long been recognized by "Public Law" among the empires rivaling for influence in the region,

¹¹¹ Tracing the origins of the war to Anglo-French agreements over Morocco and Egypt were a commonplace in the literature, see E. D. Morel, *Morocco and Armageddon*, vol. 11, Labour and War Pamphlets (Manchester and London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), *LSE* //ILP/5/1915/56; C. H. Norman, *Britain and the War: A Study in Diplomacy* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1914), pp. 2, 8-9, *ILP/5/1914/53*, *LSE*; Union of Democratic Control, *The Balance of Power* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1915), p. 15; Independent Labour Party, *How the War Came*, vol. 1, Labour and War Pamphlets (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 5, *ILP/5/1915/4*, *LSE*; 1. Fenner A. Brockway, *Is Britain Blameless?* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), pp. 5-6, *ILP/5/1915/22*, *LSE*, to list just a few examples.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

specifically dating back to the Madrid Convention of 1881. Ostensibly prompted by unrest in Morocco, France determined in 1904 to seek recognition of her special interest in maintaining order there due to her position in nearby Algeria. The Anglo-French Entente provided this recognition in language that respected the public law's dictum of maintaining an 'open door' in Morocco and, initially, proved inoffensive to the interests of other powers. In clauses hidden from even the British and French Cabinets, however, Foreign Secretary Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, then Lord Lansdowne, and his French counterpart Théophile Delcassé flouted public law, Moroccan independence, and British democracy by secretly arranging for the political and economic partition of Morocco between Spain and France. Moreover, according to Morel, the French had secretly orchestrated the unrest in Morocco to bring about such an arrangement in a larger plot to exclude Germany, her main rival in the region, in the first place.¹¹³ It was the German Kaiser, for Morel, who upheld the principles of the public law and Moroccan independence, once he got wind that Germany's then sizable economic interests in the region were being "humbugged and flouted" by officially recognizing Moroccan sovereignty in 1905 and demanding that the powers party to the Madrid Convention follow suit.¹¹⁴

For his part, Delcassé left no doubt that the Entente meant more than cordial feelings in his reaction to the German overtures, declaring in the French newspaper *Gaulois* (published soon after in the *Times* and various newspapers in Germany), "Of what importance would the young navy of Germany be in the event of war, in which England, I tell you, would assuredly be with us against Germany? What would become

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8-9.

of Germany's ports, of her trade, of her mercantile marine? They would be annihilated."¹¹⁵ Similarly, the *Times*, that "ever-faithful thermometer of Downing Street temperature... believed all over the Continent to be the mouthpiece of the British Foreign Office," according to Morel, along with "virtually all the British Tory Press," responded with "inconceivable" violence, heaping "threats and insults [and] abuse" upon Germany and the Kaiser and "scornfully and violently" denying the right of Germany to any voice in the settlement of Moroccan affairs.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, at German insistence, the Algeiras Conference of 1906 "laid down in explicit terms the Public Law of Europe with regard to Morocco's future" declaring its provisions to be based upon the "Sovereignty and independence of his Majesty the Sultan [of Morocco], the integrity of his dominion, and economic liberty without any inequality."¹¹⁷ Even before the Act of Algeiras had been signed, however, Lansdowne and Delcassé's replacements, Grey and French Ambassador Paul Cambon, had already begun new rounds of secret "conversations" even more explicitly coordinating their military planning in anticipation of such tensions eventually leading to open conflict with Germany.¹¹⁸

ILP writers produced similar accounts of the Entente, all of which pinpointed 1905 as the moment when British foreign policy became specifically directed at isolating Germany in Europe and, consequently, the beginning of the road to the Great War.¹¹⁹

The next step down that road, according to the UDC pamphlet *The Balance of Power*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9. Delcassé's statements were reprinted in *Times of London* on July 13, 1905.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8-9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10. Also see John W. Coogan and Peter F. Coogan, "The British Cabinet and the Anglo-French Staff Talks, 1905-1914: Who Knew What and When Did He Know It?," *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1985): 110-131.

¹¹⁹ C. H. Norman, *Britain and the War: A Study in Diplomacy* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1914); Fenner A. Brockway, *Is Britain Blameless?* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915); Independent Labour Party, *How the War Came*, vol. 1, Labour and War Pamphlets (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915).

(1914), was taken in 1907 with the Anglo-Russian Entente. Like the Anglo-French agreement, the Russian Entente involved a *quid pro quo* of recognition of ‘spheres of influence,’ the latter being concerned with the division of Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. It also shared the ulterior intent of checking the expansion of German interests and influence along the inter-imperial frontier by empowering her main regional rival and exchanged declarations of intent to support one another in the case of outside aggression.¹²⁰ A third component of these agreements drawing the opprobrium of dissenting writers was the tacit complicity of the British Government in the exploitative and expansionist policies of the French and the Russians in the regions concerned.

In Morocco, according to Morel, French “officialdom,” backed “to the uttermost” by the British and in utter violation of her “solemn Treaty obligations, ... bullied, tricked, [and] exploited” the rulers of Morocco into complete economic and political submission, driving the state itself into a “bloody chaos” of civil unrest and economic depression.¹²¹ In Persia, Russian agents similarly derailed the emerging constitutional movement, restored the despotic Shah from his exile, occupied by force the richest and most populous provinces, and aided in the disruption of the administrative missions attempting to restore Persia’s ailing political and economic infrastructure then being conducted by the United States.¹²² In both cases, dissenting writers argued, the Foreign Office had been permitted to sacrifice the sanctity of public law and to subject the national integrity

¹²⁰ Union of Democratic Control, *The Balance of Power* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915), pp. 16 and 17, *Morel/F13/6*, LSE.

¹²¹ Morel, *Morocco*, p. 3.

¹²² UDC, *Balance of Power*, p. 17.

of weaker powers to the exploitative and expansionist whims of France and Russia specifically “because our policy was rapidly becoming anti-German in Europe.”¹²³

The first major challenge to the legitimacy of this use of public law to adjust the balance of power in Europe at the expense of small powers and rival empires came not from Berlin, but from Constantinople through the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. As C.H. Norman, a socialist agitator for the ILP and journalist known for his critical attitude toward imperial policy,¹²⁴ explained in the ILP pamphlet *Britain and the War* (1914), with the rise of the Young Turk regime, “the Powers, who had divided among themselves certain portions of the Turkish Empire feared that Turkey might be induced to challenge the proceedings under which partial dismemberment of her Empire had taken place,” namely the settlement of the Crimean War (1853-56) in which the belligerent empires recognized the independence of the Balkan States from the Ottoman Empire, along with their division into spheres of Austrian and Russian influence, as public law.¹²⁵ For the UDC’s Henry Noel Brailsford, perhaps one of the most prolific British journalists of the early twentieth-century and staunch critic of balance of power diplomacy, 1908 marked a pinnacle turn on the road toward what he considered to be a European “war for the Empire of the East.”¹²⁶

Fearful of both Turkish and Russian designs in the regions, Austria responded to the Young Turk Revolution by formally annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina. Perceiving this act as a violation of the “Austro-Russian *condominium*,” argued Brailsford, the

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ See, for example, C. H. Norman, “Empire and Murder,” *Social Democrat* Vol. 10, no. 5 (May 1906): pp. 264-273.

¹²⁵ Norman, *Britain and the War*, p. 1.

¹²⁶ Henry Noel Brailsford, *The Origins of the Great War* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 14, *LSE/Morel/F13/6/1*,

Russian Government accelerated its policy of encouraging Serbian dreams of Pan-Slavic unity at the expense of Austrian legitimacy in the province of Bosnia and Ottoman legitimacy in the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia.¹²⁷ Meanwhile, the “strangulation of all non-French enterprise” in Morocco, for Morel, was driving Austria’s ally Germany to take a stand, however symbolic, by anchoring a single gunboat, the infamous *Panther*, off Agadir in 1911, that would bring the two powers to the brink of war.¹²⁸ The Balkans were soon to follow in 1912 with Serbia marching toward pan-Slavic independence from Austria “in Russian greatcoats” and “financed by the French banks,” according to Brailsford, and ultimately wringing international recognition of her gains in territory and prestige in the Balkans through peace settlements that were “directed as much against Austria as against Turkey” in 1913.¹²⁹

Although German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg was able to successfully arrange a *quid pro quo* with France recognizing French claims to Morocco in exchange for her recognition of German claims in West Africa and willing to accept the conclusion of the Balkan Wars in favor of the Serbians, he nevertheless came to view the two as aspects of the greater aim of “the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy [and] the scattering or weakening of the Triple Alliance with a complete isolation of the Germany Empire in consequence,” a policy he believed, according to Norman, had been initiated by King Edward and gradually extended through secret partnerships with Russia, France, and even Japan.¹³⁰ The “British Tory Press” played no small role in encouraging this conclusion, for Morel, responding to the Agadir Crisis with

¹²⁷ Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Morel, *Morocco*, p. 4.

¹²⁹ Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 7.

¹³⁰ Norman, *Britain and the War*, p. 2 and Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 7-9.

a “desperate eagerness... to convince the British public that Germany’s ‘affront’ was an affront to *us*; that Germany was threatening *us*,”¹³¹ a sentiment also conveyed by Grey and Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George in their 1913 statements to German Government and British people respectively that British imperial interests were to be protected against German aggression even at the cost of war.¹³²

The “naked simplicity” of the German “case” for taking up the cudgels of Austria over the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand even into a pan-European war was illustrated by Brailsford in a quote from the German White Paper in which her precarious position within the balance of power was made clear;

Had the Servians been allowed, with the help of Russia and France, to endanger the integrity of the neighbouring [Austro-Hungarian] Monarchy much longer, the consequence must have been the gradual disruption of Austria, and the subjection of the whole Slav world to the Russian scepter, with the result that the position of the German race in central Europe would have become untenable.¹³³

Even more directly, Reginald Clifford Allen, manager of the PLP’s organ the *Daily Citizen* and close friend of Ramsay MacDonald, linked Germany’s belligerence to British foreign policy in the ILP pamphlet *Is Germany Right and Britain Wrong?* (1916).

“Germany,” Allen argued at length,

is a nation of vigour and strength, she is a new nation, she is a growing nation... what did this young nation find? Herself surrounded on all sides. Her expansion forbidden... it is we who have forced all this German vigour into the wrong channels... we have branded her whole national life with a military spirit; her only defense was one of aggressive preparation—and where better could she learn that spirit than from the Empire upon which the sun never sets?¹³⁴

¹³¹ Morel, *Morocco*, p. 14.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 17. Morel quotes from Grey’s correspondence with the German Ambassador on July 23 and Lloyd George’s Mansion House speech of July 22.

¹³³ Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Clifford Allen, *Is Germany Right and Britain Wrong?* (Lawrence Mansions, 1914), p. 16. //ILP/1916/3, LSE. For a more complete discussion of dissenting positions on German war guilt in relation to British foreign policy, see Swartz, pp. 73-78 and Harris, pp. 85-88.

As the ILP's National Council would suggest in its manifesto on the war, "when all this has been done, any spark will start a conflagration like the present."¹³⁵ The mere fact that the concert of European power could have become so gyroscopically balanced along the inter-imperial frontier as to careen into a global conflagration at the assassination of one man or the invasion of "little Belgium" was clear evidence, for the dissenting writers of the ILP and UDC at least, that the prewar system of international relations was flawed at a foundational level. It was to the elucidation of these systemic prewar problems and the implications they held for the postwar world that writers of this mind then turned.

Exactly how the progress of inter-imperial civilization had sown the seeds of its own undoing was explained by the UDC through an examination of a "set of political ideas conveniently summed up in the phrase of the Balance of Power" in a UDC pamphlet dedicated to the subject.¹³⁶ The importance of understanding the concept, as the UDC pamphlet *The Balance of Power* indicated in its opening sentence, was that "Friends, enemies, and Englishmen irrespective of political opinion have all connected our part in the Great European War with the doctrine of the Balance of Power."¹³⁷ That the balance was "an accepted dogma of British foreign policy" had been clearly evident in the speeches of Asquith and Grey in justifying going to war.¹³⁸ There was far more to the doctrine, however, than "the principle followed for centuries by British policy of making head against the Continental Power which was strongest for the time being."¹³⁹

¹³⁵ *Labour Leader*, August 13th, 1914.

¹³⁶ UDC, *Balance of Power*, p.1-2.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹³⁸ See above, pp. 3-9.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Quoting the words of the doctrine's 'admirers,' a long list of well-known academics, politicians, and intellectuals, the authors offered a popular positive conception of the make up and legacy of the balance of power. Citing the works of Emerich de Vattel, the doctrine was described as emerging in response to the increasing interdependence of European nations on one another as they developed into an organic unity, "one political system... in which every part is connected... in such a disposition of affairs that no Power can ever find itself in a position to enjoy undisputed predominance and to impose the law on others."¹⁴⁰ Subsequently, the existence of nations, according to H.P. Brougham, came to be defined less "in proportion to their internal resources [and more] in proportion to the place which they occupy in a vast and regular system," a system in which the "most powerful States, are for their own sakes, constantly watching over the safety of the most insignificant."¹⁴¹ The "balance of power" such relationships demanded, according to L.F.L. Oppenheim, provided both the necessity of and the necessary equilibrium for the emergence of international law, for "a law of nations can exist only if there is an equilibrium... if the Powers cannot keep one another in check, no rules of law will have any force... a balance of power must prevent any member... from becoming omnipotent."¹⁴² In the views of these admirers, the author summarized, the doctrine, though resting "on the instinct of self-preservation... has been developed into a political system, under the shelter of which the conceptions of international equity and the rule of law have grown in strength. It has protected the smaller nations, encouraged diversity of national type, and introduced greater stability in human affairs."¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Quoting from Vattel's *Le Droit des Gens*, Book 3, Ch. 3, Sect. 47.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Quoting from Brougham's *Essays* Vol. 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* Quoting from Oppenheim's *International Law*, Vol. 1, pp. 73 and 185.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Such a 'conception of political philosophy,' however, failed to consider the "inevitable inequality of power" pervasive in all human interrelations, for, as the authors argued, "Nations, like men, are equal in respect of rights, but in every other respect, like men, are inevitably unequal."¹⁴⁴ The "fundamental vice of the Doctrine" was its tendency to suppress, rather than nurture the development of national consciousness in its protectorates,

regarding nations, not as living organisms, but as inert pieces of mechanism, without taking account of the movement which is perpetually modifying them and of the revolution that a man or an idea may suddenly introduce into the relations of one people with another. It seeks vainly to suspend the growth of vital force, to prevent this people from growing greater and another from declining, and it argues against the rise of the sap in a nation's springtime by quotations from the dusty archives of Foreign Offices.¹⁴⁵

Rather than progressing toward a more egalitarian international future, "the Balance of Power in practice... has usually contemplated that eminently unideal thing known in diplomatic circles as the *status quo ante*," with the victors of "wars for the Balance" taking the day of their victories "without consideration of whether the state of things existing at that date was in accordance with reason or justice, and say that that was the ideal distribution of power, and that every disturbance of that relation was an offence which had to be corrected, by war if necessary," the Peace of Westphalia (1648), Treaty of Utrecht (1713), or Peace of Vienna (1815), being but a few examples.¹⁴⁶ Inherent in these agreements was the "celebrated principle of the *quit pro quo*" concerning territory,

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

“the principle by which if one robber steals a man’s purse another thereby acquires the right to his overcoat and a third to his watch and chain.”¹⁴⁷

The thematic comparison of the treatment, as well as the fate, of less powerful nations to that of less politically empowered men was not merely a rhetorical tool, but a statement of the interrelation of domestic and foreign policy in Britain, the practice of balance of power diplomacy internationally being

the equivalent, in international politics of the worst kind of Toryism in home politics. It asked nations to accept the position as settled by the last war as divine law, just as the domestic equivalent of the Doctrine asked the individual to accept the position into which he was born as the station to which God had called him, whereas, in fact, no one had called him to it but his father and mother.¹⁴⁸

It was, in fact, the “early Whigs,” with their Francophobic tendencies, that linked “a sound domestic policy with the maintenance of the Balance abroad” of checking French influence, “foreshadow[ing] a constantly-recurring tragedy in the development of progressive political thought in England.”¹⁴⁹ The ideals of both the American and French Revolutions were, the authors argued, derived from the England’s legacy of progressive thought dating back to the Glorious Revolution. And yet, driven by balance of power politics, British Governments persisted in policies hostile to both leading to a series of wars in which the British abetted the subjugation of the revolutionary spirit of 1789 in France to the authoritarian rule of Napoleon, alienated and ultimately lost their own American colonies, and “victoriously defeated in our own country the ideas of 1688.”¹⁵⁰ Not only was balance of power politics opposed to the spirit of 1688, having never “in its long history... showed the least regard for the rights of the peoples... [being] equally

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

ready to suppress the just desires of a people rightly struggling to be free... [as it was] sometimes opposed to the wrongful ambitions of tyrants,” it was responsible for midwifing its antithesis in the rebirth of European militarism.¹⁵¹

With the rise of the specter of Germany as, to the mind of Viscount Grey, Britain’s most dangerous competitor for European supremacy, the doctrine of the balance was evolved from a policy of maintaining a *status quo* to one of forcefully isolating German power in Europe through entangling agreements with Russia and France that directly precipitated the Franco-Russian conflict with Germany and drew Britain into the fray immediately after them. The pursuit of such a policy, argued the UDC, was folly in that it ignored a basic political principle that national and imperial “growth and decline are the laws of Nature and cannot permanently be arrested by external force.” What made such folly a tragedy, it was argued, was its self-perpetuating nature, for “as every war for the Balance has ended in failure, so every peace governed by it will be a preparation for another war.”¹⁵²

In recasting the First World War as the inevitable result of British foreign, imperial, and, indeed, domestic policy making, UDC and ILP writers called into question the very legitimacy of the principles undergirding Britain’s ‘imperial democracy’ at the beginning of the twentieth century. As the self-appointed, and sole, Party of Peace in the United Kingdom, dissenting leaders also recast themselves as the foremost alternative leadership nucleus for a postwar British democracy committed to reversing the policy trends that had brought the nation into war in the first place. At the center of their policy

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

of critique and reform, as the above discussion has attempted to show, was the argument that prewar Victorian imperial ideals and the progress of democracy had become opposed, if not antithetical, to one another even under the leadership of the Liberal Party.

Over the next two years, dissenting leaders would turn their attention to making political capital out of the popular support they were generating for a peace settlement along the very lines established by Asquith in his calls to arms. The Party of Peace, as the following chapter will illustrate, would transition during the course of the war into the main party of opposition to both the government itself and the prewar principles that had guided it into nothing short of Armageddon. A key component of dissenting propaganda driving this transition was the absolute inability of the political institutions of British government to privilege the needs of the nation over those of the Empire and the ruling class elites at its helm. In proving this supposition, dissenting leaders would draw from their own political legacy of challenging the corruption of national democracy in Britain into the inter-imperial despotism that had come to characterize it in recent decades. In so doing, I argue, these writers would not only undermine the legitimacy of British imperial rule at the popular level, but set the British nation on the road toward an era of decolonization in which the Labour movement would play a decisive role.

Chapter 2: Resisting the 'Philosophy of Expropriation'

Whether the outbreak of the Great War had been avoidable or inevitable, the leadership of the Union of Democratic Control and the Independent Labour Party soon conceded the "imperative," as the UDC put it, "that, once begun, the war should be prosecuted to a victory for our country."¹ Nevertheless, dissenting writers invariably agreed with the sentiment, expressed by H.N. Brailsford, that the British people "are taking a parochial view of Armageddon if we allow ourselves to imagine that it is primarily a struggle for the independence of Belgium and the future of France," as the Government had claimed.² For the 'spirit of Prussianism'³ was not some anomalistic and alien political philosophy that could be out-brutalized on the battlefield, but the governing dynamic of inter-imperial culture itself, with deep roots in the national political culture of their own Empire no less than that of every other belligerent power. The first step toward a true victory for the British people, in the sense dissenting writers envisioned it, over inter-imperial war itself was a popular recognition that their own system of Government had long been blackened with the same brush as their ostensible enemies and was no less likely than they to turn a military victory into a bid for global supremacy and the peace into merely the prelude to future wars. Such recognition was made especially urgent, it was argued, by the already perceptible drift of the Government away from its early liberal and idealistic aims for the war and into a more ambitious

¹ Union of Democratic Control, *The Morrow of War*, (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p.1, *Morel/F13/6/1*, LSE.

² Henry Noel Brailsford, *The Origins of the Great War* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 13. *ILP/5/1914/53*, LSE.

³ 'Prussianism' would have been understood by most Britons as a national adoration for militarism as a principle of social organization characterized by early modern Prussia. 'Militarism' would have meant the predominance of military discipline in both society and in governmental administration coupled with the belief in the legitimacy of military force as a means for national growth as well as defense.

agenda that, if permitted to do so, would render the reconstruction of a postwar world capable of supporting the global advance of democracy and civilization impossible.

Although primarily speculative, such arguments could not have been more prescient. For, even as they were being introduced, the Government was already secretly undertaking operations in Mesopotamia in the name of long term imperial security that, as the statesmen behind their planning and implementation well understood, would likely prolong and intensify the war in addition to compromising their commitment to 'righteous disinterestedness' in entering the fray. Although the British public would not become aware of the full implications of the political and military campaign to take Mesopotamia until the details were revealed by the UDC in 1917, by that time, as the following discussion will show, the UDC and ILP had done everything within their power to ensure that such a revelation, when it inevitably came, would be interpreted as a confirmation of the Government's illegitimacy as a democratic institution.

This chapter examines the parallel development over the first half of the war of two competing ideas about the role of the British Empire in the pre- and postwar worlds. On the one hand, the anti-democratic manner in which the policy of occupying and dividing Ottoman territories as spoils of war among the Allied Powers was made and undertaken clearly reflected an enduring sense of ruling class entitlement to determine the scope and progress democracy at home as well as the political development of peoples abroad in the name of British inter-imperial supremacy. On the other, the dissenting left's identification of precisely such an approach to imperial policy as the root cause of the collapse of European democracy into a state of 'Prussianism' established a platform of imperial reform demanding a reimagining of the imperial 'civilizing mission' as a

genuine force for international democracy in the postwar world and of Great Britain as a 'nation without possessions.'

In 1893, journalist and evolutionary theorist Grant Allen and socialist editor Andrew Reid attempted to capture in an edited volume the range of political ideas then coalescing into what they called *The New Party*.⁴ "Somewhat inaccurately called 'The Labour Party'," according to the contribution of socialist journalist and author Robert Blatchford, the New Party was comprised of five component parts, the Fabians, the Social Democratic Federation, the Labour Church, the Independent Labour Party and "the unattached supporters of 'The Cause'."⁵ The goal of the New Party, he and other contributors asserted, was to unify these socialistic left-wing collectives under one political banner. Although the need for the New Party as such would be surpassed by the evolution of the ILP and the formation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1895, the early views of the many contributors to *The New Party* on political issues demanding the attention of British socialists offer illuminating insights about their presumed preoccupation with domestic issues alone.

For William Pollard Byles, a Liberal journalist then being drawn into the Labour movement, one of the key goals of the New Party was to reverse the rise of imperial patriotism in Britain and to revive a "spirit of Nationality" or "local patriotism" in its place. The identification of "England's greatness" in "the extent of our territory, the remoteness of our dependencies, the strength of our navy, the deadly precision of our arms, the impregnability of our forts, the gold in our cellars, or even the volume of our

⁴ Andrew Reid, ed., *The New Party Described by Some of its Members* (London: Hodder Brothers, 1894).

⁵ Robert Blatchford, "The New Party in the North," in Reid, *The New Party*, p. 13.

trade” by “imperialists, as self-styled patriots love to call themselves” had had a detrimental impact, for Byles, on the national progress both at home and abroad.⁶ The obsession of broadening British sovereignty had “choked the machine” of Parliamentary government at home, disabling statesmen from attending to the dire socio-economic conditions of so many Britons. Abroad, it had given legitimacy to an abhorrent policy of “vanquishing and exterminating native races, and then exploiting the resources of their country; seeking commercial gain under the hypocritical guise of civilization... and killing the blacks because it is so good for the whites and for the world at large.” If imperialism was to be had, Byles demanded, “we want a nobler Imperialism than [that] one.”⁷

The imperial platform Byles envisioned for the New Party was one committed to the devolution of power through the stimulation of localized government from the metropole to the periphery of the Empire. Beginning at home, the affairs of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales would be devolved onto Irish, Scots, and Welshmen, followed by the Dominions and then India until all former British subjects “do for themselves, and do well, much that the joint overstrained common Parliament now perforce leaves undone, or does badly and ignorantly.”⁸ For it was only when English statesmen had freed those people that they themselves would be truly free to provide for a genuinely democratic national experience in England.⁹

Although it may be true, as Stephen Howe has argued, that anti-imperialist sentiment among the British left before the First World War was limited in its extent to a

⁶ W.P. Byles, “Ideals: Imperial and Social,” in Reid, *The New Party*, pp. 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

handful of Radical, Liberal, and Socialist intellectuals and in its scope to an ambivalent adherence to the broad principles of internationalism and pacifism,¹⁰ socialistically minded writers and the ILP in particular were nevertheless alive to the fact that the emerging class of ‘new imperialists’ in the late nineteenth century had identified the ‘resurrection’ of British socialism as a major threat to the survival of the British Empire.¹¹ Indeed, according to Bernard Porter, “strong anti-democratic and anti-socialist threads... [were] common to much of the imperialist writing of this time... raising the question of which—imperialism or anti-democracy—was being used to serve which.”¹² As both Porter and John MacKenzie, have argued, the promotion of imperial patriotism should be viewed as an “alternative means of social control” exercised by the ruling classes at a time of pronounced “unwillingness [among the working classes] to accept their ‘place’ in society.”¹³ In their critiques of its naïve or contradictory expressions, however, historians have tended to dismiss, with Howe, the notion that anti-imperial sentiment in early socialist propaganda was doing similar work in redefining a sense of British national identity. As the following discussion will show, the imperial critique taken up by dissenting writers during the war was more a continuation of prewar concerns with the Empire than a break with an exclusively domestic policy focus in imagining Britain’s future as a ‘nation without possessions.’

¹⁰ Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1939-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 27-71. See also A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan and Co. LTD, 1959), pp. 95-109.

¹¹ For a discussion of the rise of imperial preservationist societies in the late nineteenth century, see John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 1-14 and 147-198 and Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 164-169.

¹² Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p. 206.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168, and MacKenzie, pp. 1-14 and 147-198.

In 1900, the ILP pamphlet *Imperialism: Its Meaning and its Tendency* emphasized a crucial connection between the corruption of Britain's 'civilizing mission' into a policy of conquest abroad and the stifling of democratic progress at home. That is not to say, however, that the ILP advocated dismantling the Empire. Rather, the recent "wave of Imperialistic sentiment" that the authors viewed as "interrupt[ing]... the steady development of home politics" had merely brought home the necessity of bringing the civilizing mission back into line with its ostensible aims of nurturing, rather than obstructing, the progress of national democracy in the world. For although "conquest may have opened up one civilization to another in times long antecedent to the steam engine and world commerce," they argued, "to-day its only effect is to crush out and level down all national life to the dead uniformity of an alien political routine."

There was no escaping that the Empire was a fact of British life, however, and "just as there is a personal responsibility to the State," the authors explained, "there is such a thing as the responsibility of a State to the world... [and] if a nation is to do any good in the world, it must, like an individual, believe that it has a mission."¹⁴ That mission, for the 'man on the street,' was for the British people, chosen by right of their inherent virtue and deserved power, to take a commanding position in determining the spheres of action of all nations in the name of sowing and tending the seeds of civilization in whatever underdeveloped regions they saw fit to plant the Union Jack.¹⁵ Though a "genuinely progressive creed" in principle, the authors insisted, the measure of its legitimacy had to be the extent to which "the stronger nation [could] show that its

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6. For a discussion of how working class Britons considered the Empire in the wider world in the years leading up to the war, see Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, pp. 194-226, and David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916* (London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 49-68.

discipline has an educational effect, that it is leading the subject nation up to a full measure of self-government.” In this respect, the authors argued, British administrations had invariably failed, having tended to despoil rather than develop the national characteristics of peoples under their rule.¹⁶

As the many years of British rule in India and Egypt had shown, even a “benevolently imposed foreign law and order... has lain more heavily upon the national life” than the petty factions of unstable indigenous government it had replaced in terms of fostering a robust and self-sustaining national political identity.¹⁷ The reason for this failure, the authors explained, was the tendency of the British imperialist to view civilization as progressing mono-linearly and of democratic government as something that could be coercively imposed from the outside. The abject confidence of the imperialist in the superiority of his own culture had blinded him to the fact that “there is not only one good civilization but many” or that it was “not only impossible for one nation to civilize another by governing it... [but] wrong that it should attempt to do so.”¹⁸ For “conquered nations,” the price of ‘western civilization’ was incalculably high, amounting to the unavoidable death of the national spirit. For even if such a nation is “docile and obedient,” the authors argued, “its national initiative dies out and further progress becomes impossible,” while “if it is active and clings tenaciously to its own line

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9. For a discussion of nineteenth century intellectual perspectives on the relationship between British imperialism and the progress of civilization, see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 77-110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

of development its government is not an education, but a conflict between rival social ideals and dissimilar stages of civilization.”¹⁹

The authors stressed, however, that the cost of imposing British law and order abroad was equally high for the “Imperial nation,” with such acts of cultural desecration and political suppression ultimately sanctioned by this ‘civilizing mission’ assuredly doing violence to the human instincts and political principles undergirding its own democratic culture. As the state of *fin de siècle* inter-imperial relations had clearly shown, they argued, “the acquisition of territory and its defense when acquired, ha[d] turned Europe into an armed camp.”²⁰ In Britain, as elsewhere, the necessity of reorienting the political economy toward a constant state of preparation for inter-imperial war had led to the enthronement of ‘militarism’ in the place of industry and citizenship as the determining principle for the course of domestic and foreign policy in Britain. The final consequence of such a trend for the world at large, it was prophesied, would be “not an extension of the area of civilization, but an increase in the number of dead nations,” as the underdeveloped world was devoured by its more ‘civilized’ neighbors, themselves gradually degenerating into nothing more than armed camps of conscripted citizenries rivaling over whatever territory remained left to conquer.²¹ As their own experiences and legacy should have taught them, it was simply not “possible for a self-governing people to rule a subject race and yet keep its own love of liberty... no nation can play the part of the despot (even the benevolent despot) abroad, and that of the democrat at home” forever without the principle of the later being poisoned by the practice of the former.²²

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

In the wake of the Boer War, imperial preservationists began to push even harder for a more direct hand from the government in preparation for eminent inter-imperial wars. Such organizations as the National Service League (NSL) campaigned for a more compulsory approach than before, seeking to institute a four-year term of mandatory military training for all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty.²³ In challenging the notion that the principles undergirding British imperial sovereignty were something worth preserving, ILP member and writer for the Social Democratic Foundation (SDF) Clarence Henry Norman took up the plight of colonial subjects in Natal and West Australia whom he described as “our fellow-sufferers from capitalist rule languish under worse oppression than ourselves” in his SDF pamphlet *Empire and Murder*. Building off popular outcry over the ‘Natal Executions’²⁴ and the publication of Dr. Walter Roth’s Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives of Western Australia in 1905,²⁵ Norman asserted that

As it is directed to-day, the march of civilization coincides with the degradation of human kind, rather than its ennoblement... Those who boast of “civilizing” the native races to-day apply the term to hide the fact that they are imposing on those races a system of torture and assassination, worthy of the Spanish Inquisition or the Chinese Boxers; they are busily engaged in murdering, not men, but the souls of men; not a few heretics, but the souls of races. We are told that the aim of civilization is to teach the ignorant the high ideals to which mankind should aspire – especially to impress on the heathen mind the magnificence of the spectacle of

²³ For a discussion of the expansion of the NSL after the Boer War, see R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), pp. 6-10.

²⁴ The ‘Natal Executions’ involved the sentencing to death of at least thirteen Africans over the murder of two policemen during a riot over the imposition of a new poll tax in the colony of Natal in south-eastern Africa in February, 1906. Viewed as the beginning of the Bambatha Rebellion, the decisions leading up to and including the poll tax, the imposition of martial law, the trials, and the executions all came under debate during and in the wake of the uprising. For a consideration of the 1906 uprising in relation to British colonial policy in Africa generally, see Paul S. Thompson, *An Historical Atlas of the Zulu Rebellion of 1906* (Scottsville, South Africa: Privately Published, 2001).

²⁵ Chief Protector of the Aborigines in Australia Dr. Walter Roth was tasked by the government of Australia to investigate claims of maltreatment of Aborigines in late 1904. His 1905 report was a scathing exposition of abuse including enforced servitude in the pearling industry and the trafficking of Aboriginal women by British administrators.

all men receiving even-handed justice – British justice! We admire the courage of those who contend that this is the chief justification for the civilization process, and we accept the implied challenge, knowing only too well the strength of our case.²⁶

Paralleling the failure of the recent Liberal government to address “the filthy squalor and saddening misery that we see and feel around us” at home and the perversion of the civilizing mission abroad, Norman declared that “In the history of the world of Humanity, civilization is what the Liberal Party is in the political history of England – a sham.”²⁷

In 1907, MacDonald’s *Labour and the Empire* similarly identified “a revulsion of the popular feeling against the feeble policy of Liberalism in international affairs” as the source of the pro-Empire movement, and its popularity, in Great Britain.²⁸ Treating the rise of the imperial preservationist movement and collapse of the principles of the ‘civilizing mission’ as parallel and related developments, MacDonald traced their advent to the 1870’s, when Disraeli successfully turned frustration with Liberalism’s failure to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global economy into a renewed thirst for imperial greatness. Unfortunately, he argued, that frustration had been translated “from being a mere expression of discontent to being an opposition to the free trade, the internationalism, the humanism, upon which must be founded the colonial and world policy of a democratic State.”²⁹ As a result, any standards of ‘British justice or honor’ in

²⁶ C. H. Norman, *Empire and Murder*, (London: Social Democratic Foundation, 1906).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ For a discussion of MacDonald’s views on the Empire generally, see James Meadowcroft, *Conceptualizing the State: Innovation and Dispute in British Political Thought 1880-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 185-93; and Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), pp. 185-190.

²⁹ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire* (London: George Allen, 1907), p. 14.

imperial administration were brushed aside as Britain's 'New Imperialists' rushed to squeeze every drop of wealth, power, and prestige out of their Empire.

The development of democracy in territories under British rule was not only abandoned, MacDonald insisted, it was systematically crushed in the name of maximizing profits and minimizing overhead even at the cost of transforming free peoples into serfs or even slaves.³⁰ In explaining this transition, MacDonald retraced the steps of British imperial expansion to show how inter-imperial competition for foreign markets had driven British tradesmen to abandon any sense of fair play in favor of the more expeditious methods of exploitation, often followed by Government assisted domination occasionally resulting in annexation. The result, he argued, had been the coordinated devolution of foreign, domestic, and imperial policy alike into brutally "unsympathetic and unimaginative" mechanisms of British imperial supremacy, now "in declared hostility to democracy" both at home and abroad, should it stand in the way of that endeavor.³¹ Nevertheless, he professed the Labour movement's commitment to its own vision for the future of the Empire, suggesting that "the British Empire under democratic custodianship can be a powerful element in the maintenance of peace and the promotion of the international spirit," if the reins could be taken out of the hands of bureaucrats and financiers ("the mind behind imperialism with more to say in foreign relations than the Foreign Secretary of all the King's ministers put together," in MacDonald's view³²) and put into the hands of the British people.³³ The primary goal of Labour's imperial policy, MacDonald and Norman assured their readers, was to infuse

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15. See also, Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge and Rochester, 1998), pp. 69-71.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

“the Juggernaut car of Empire”³⁴ British imperialism had become with the tempering balm of British democracy in an attempt to bring the Empire and the nation alike back into line with the essential principles of British national culture before it dragged them into an inter-imperial war for global domination.

Although historians disagree on whether the decline of Liberalism as the main party of opposition in Britain began sometime before the outbreak of the war or over its course, few would question Asquith’s concern at its outbreak that his liberal credentials remain intact as a wartime Prime Minister.³⁵ By 1914, two Liberal administrations had kept the gathering movement for ‘military preparedness’ for just such a conflict in political check because they believed that the general public, strongly opposed to any form of compulsory training or service, would never support it.³⁶ Now, with the clouds of war gathering, tensions between what Nicoletta Gullace has described as a “broadly liberal paradigm that regarded free will as central to the constitution of a patriotic and moral citizenry” at the heart of British Liberalism and the inherent “distrust of democracy and the potential radicalism of the masses” shared by most Conservative leaders were coming to the fore over the immediate necessity of assembling an army, but also over the aims and manner in which the war would be prosecuted.³⁷

Less than a fortnight into the war, in almost a caricature of the imperially minded ‘enemy at home’ disparaged by the ILP for decades, First Lord of the Admiralty and

³⁴ Norman, *Murder and Empire*.

³⁵ For a discussion of historians’ perspectives on these issues, see Keith Laybourn, “The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate,” *History* 80, no. 259 (1995): pp. 207-226.

³⁶ R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), pp. 6-10.

³⁷ Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 101, 104-105 and 170-171.

staunch Liberal imperialist Winston Churchill advised the immediate conscription of all unmarried men and a preemptive attack on the Dardanelle Straits. According to David French, Churchill believed that an early British victory so near the Ottoman capital could fuel opposition to the war and the government throughout the empire, hastening the final collapse of the 'Sick man of Europe' and the end of the war alike. Moreover, the role played by British forces in the collapse would place the government in a powerful position to determine the "ultimate destination" of conquered territories, as Churchill would later put it, in relation to British imperial interests at war's end.³⁸ Although alive its advantages both for the war and the postwar balance of power, Asquith's decision to scuttle Churchill's scheme reflected his concern that the government's aims for the war be perceived, throughout the British Empire and the world, as completely free of any such imperial ambitions.

Intelligence from the Ottoman territories had been warning for some time of a Turco-German propaganda effort to generate a pan-Islamic *jihad* from Cairo to Bombay in which reversing British encroachment into the *Dar-al-Islam* was the central message. Any indication that Britain intended to use the war to expand its imperial presence in Ottoman territories, it was feared, could spark revolt among Muslims already under British rule to the detriment of the war effort and even the future of British sovereignty in the Eastern Empire.³⁹ On the home front, as criticisms of the recent war in South Africa had shown, the British public was less inclined than ever before to view wars of conquest

³⁸ David French, "The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914-1916," *War & Society* 5, no. 1 (1987), p. 50.
and Adams and Poirier, p. 64-66

³⁹ In this view, Asquith was influenced by the so-called Indo-Egypt Party of Foreign Secretary Edward Grey, General Kitchener, and Viceroy of India Lord Crewe, see French, p. 50 and Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 12-15.

as part of a civilizing or imperial mission worthy of their service or support.⁴⁰ Popular hostility and organized opposition to compulsory service for the preservation of the empire since the end of the Boer War, most statesmen realized, demanded that the justifications for the war be framed as “a set of transcendent common values, including the sanctity of family, nation, and manly honor, [that would] inspire all eligible Britons to take up arms voluntarily,” according to Gullace.⁴¹ Accordingly, in his calls to arms, Asquith screened the less noble aspects of Britain’s involvement in the conflict from the public eye and presented his government’s cause in intervening as a righteous fight for the principle of nationality characterized by a ‘benevolent disinterest’ in any form of imperial aggrandizement. As I have argued above, Asquith even went so far as to recast the role of the British Empire in the world as the most powerful force for the progress of global democracy and the war as the opportunity to reconfigure inter-imperial politics around the principle of nationality protected by an enforced adherence to the public right.⁴² Faced with the realities of fighting an inter-imperial global war, however, Asquith would quickly be confronted by the limitations of his Liberal principles and drawn into a war of territorial conquest in which conscription, and his own political demise, would become unavoidable.

Dissenting writers took immediate issue with Asquith’s conception of the Empire and its role in furthering the cause of democracy by placing their criticisms of Britain’s imperial legacy and prescriptions for its reform at the center of their propaganda campaign. Among the earliest dissenting voices to take on imperial issues specifically

⁴⁰ Adams and Poirier, pp. 16-17; Gullace, pp. 100-103

⁴¹ Gullace, p. 101.

⁴² See above, Ch. 1, pp. 7-12.

was longstanding member of the ILP and manager of the Parliamentary Labour Party's organ the *Daily Citizen* Reginald Clifford Allen. In a speech given shortly after the war's outbreak and later published as a pamphlet for the ILP, Allen assured his audience that "Belgian neutrality or no Belgian neutrality, Britain would have been involved in this war" for the very plain reason that "accepting our foreign policy and our view of the Balance of Power, it was to our interest to join in."⁴³ One had merely to "look at a map and note how much of it is painted red," he argued, to see who the great imperial hegemon of the prewar world had been and thus, in his view, the party most interested in maintaining *status quo ante* of the balance of power at whatever cost.⁴⁴ With many dissenting writers, Allen viewed with a profound sense of irony Asquith's conjecture, which he quoted in his speech, that

We do not covet any people's territory, we have no desire to impose our rule upon alien populations. The British Empire is enough for us (Laughter and cheers)... does it not follow from that that nowhere in the world is there a people who have stronger motives to avoid war and to seek to ensure peace? (cheers).⁴⁵

For what followed, Allen argued, was merely that the British had been "first in," having already "'cornered' the world" in terms of territorial conquest through wars no different in kind than the one then besetting them.⁴⁶ Like all imperial competitors of the prewar world, Allen explained, Britain's domestic, imperial, and foreign policy alike had long rested on the simple principle of 'no change except that it be to my advantage and then by whatever means necessary at whatever cost to others,' a maxim he termed the

⁴³ Clifford Allen, *Is Germany Right and Britain Wrong?* (Lawrence Mansions, 1914), p. 21. *ILP/5/1916/3*, *LSE*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

“philosophy of expropriation.”⁴⁷ When “all the best of the world is appropriated” and “there is no room for change,” he pointed out, the natural growth and expansion of any nation becomes an act of inter-imperial aggression by default and, thus, a prelude to war.⁴⁸ There could be little doubt, he assured his audience, that such had been the case with the rise of Germany to the minds of British statesmen or that the same principles that had guided the British Empire to the apex of the balance of power had not already “prevailed upon our leaders to reject their former beliefs with regard either to war in general, or this war in particular” in the name of maintaining that supremacy at the peace.⁴⁹ The fact that such an endeavor was being presented to the British public as a crusade in defense of the rights of small powers, Allen asserted, merely proved that the “philosophy [of expropriation] prevails as much in our international relationships, as in our home organization.”⁵⁰

Founder of the socialist paper *Forward* Thomas Johnston followed Allen’s arguments in the ILP pamphlet *Secret Diplomacy, Capitalism, and War* (1915). It had not been “some supernatural power, some great dynamic force [that] brought this red ruin to Europe, as those who declare the war to have been ‘inevitable’ would have us believe,” he argued, but rather the logical culmination of the intermarriage of capitalistic and imperial practices that had characterized the last century of European development. “Look over Europe,” Johnston enjoined his readers,

Profits, profits upon profits, invested abroad wherever there be profusion in minerals or cheap raw material in cotton or labour; the agents of one set of investors running into conflict with the agents of another set of investors; and then ‘delicate situations,’ ‘diplomatic pressure,’ threats, bluff, movements of gunboats,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

and occasionally war. I do not say that all wars have been or are directly due to the clash of rival financial interests... but the day is long gone when nations of men will murder one another for the Love of God or for Bonnie Prince Charlie; nowadays they will organize murder for nothing less than fair interest upon investment and more opportunities for extending that investment.⁵¹

Certainly, Britain's own expansion had been characterized by such a process no less than her competitors and to similar effect. In his ILP pamphlet *Militarism* (1915), former Chair of the ILP and editor of the *Labour Leader* Bruce Glasier challenged the popularly assumed "natural connection between commerce and peace" with passages borrowed from Sir John Seeley's well-known *Expansion of England*,

How came we to conquer India? Was it not a direct consequence of trading with India? And that is only the most conspicuous illustration of a law which prevails through English history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the law, namely, of the interdependence of war and trade, so that throughout that period trade leads naturally to war and war fosters trade... England grew more warlike at that time as she grew more commercial.⁵²

The long-term effect of this process on the practice of imperialism, as MacDonald had pointed out, had been the reduction of the civilizing mission to a mechanism for generating new markets and securing access to resources for which coercive exploitation and even inter-imperial war had become legitimate methods of imperial protectionism.⁵³ Far from the engine of global democracy, dissenting writers presented the British Empire as the main bulwark against the progress of civilization itself. Only a popular reckoning with the 'Prussianization' of British democracy it had wrought at home, they argued,

⁵¹ Thomas Johnston, *Secret Diplomacy, Capitalism and War* (Glasgow: Forward Printing and Publishing Coy., LTD., 1915), p. 4, *ILP Pamphlets*, 328.61, PHM.

⁵² John Seeley, *The Expansion of England; Two Courses of Lectures*, (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 127, quoted in Bruce Glasier, *Militarism* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915) *ILP* 5/1915/40, *LSE*, p. 15.

⁵³ See MacDonald, *Labour and Empire*.

could hope to reverse this trend from the center of the inter-imperial world outward and save civilization from its darkening fate.

Dissenting writers appropriated the terms 'Prussianism' and 'Militarism' directly from the dichotomizing rhetoric of the Asquith administration to draw attention to the anti-democratic characteristics all European empires, in fact, shared in common. MacDonald spoke for many dissenting writers in his first publication for the UDC, *War and the Workers* (1914), in stating that, in his view, "what is known as Prussian militarism differs only in degree from British militarism," and, thus, "Great Britain as well as Prussia [will have] much to clear away as the result of the war."⁵⁴ Like every 'Great Power,' he reiterated, British domestic, foreign, and imperial policy had long been plagued by the growing influence of an imperially minded military caste that "wishes for war" as a means of checking the growth of rivals abroad as well as that of reformist movements in their own nations.⁵⁵ As Britain's own history had shown, he noted, war had invariably served 'Reactionary' interests, rather than the progress of such movements for the expansion of democracy. Even the French Revolution, he argued, had afforded the British Government the opportunity to crush "a strong and all-but-successful Radical movement... in full swing in British politics... [taking] half a century out of the life of British democracy... and [giving] the Reaction an extension of life for thirty or forty years."⁵⁶ If the current conflict was to be kept from similarly frustrating the progress of democracy by the forces of Reaction at home, he argued, the time had come for the British people to

⁵⁴ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *War and the Workers* (Union of Democratic Control, 1914), pp. 4 and 15. *Morel/F13/6/1, LSE.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Take from them the power to do so; shackle them with the responsibility of having to carry public opinion with them—not the farcical responsibility of consulting Parliament when wars have virtually begun, but the real responsibility of giving men and organizations of goodwill time to make themselves felt in the decisions of the nations.⁵⁷

“To do this,” he asserted, “is to be the responsibility of Labour.”⁵⁸ The first step toward mobilizing the public towards this end was to illustrate precisely how much their imperial patriotism had come to cost them in blood, treasure, and the very characteristics that defined them as modern ‘free-born Britons.’

The most complete consideration of the decent of British domestic political culture itself into ‘Prussianism’ published by the UDC and the ILP during the war was Glasier’s two part series *Militarism* and *The Peril of Conscription* (1915). Glasier began his study by defining the essential aspects of modern British identity as “the love of freedom—personal and political—in the liking for constitutionalism, and the sense of civic fellowship, together with the hatred of lawlessness, autocracy, and servility,” characteristics and he collectively termed “British Civicism.”⁵⁹ It was no coincidence, he argued, that, foundational though they seemed, such attributes only truly took root in Britain at the closing of an epoch of imperial expansion with the defeat of Britain’s main imperial rival at Waterloo in 1815. For it was only then that “the moneyed classes [became] too deeply engrossed in developing manufactures for the home market and for America and other lands... to have patience with schemes of further conquest or warlike enterprises.” While “imperialism languished” over the course of the nineteenth century, Glasier explained, the “rousing Liberal cry... [of] ‘peace, retrenchment, and reform’” was

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵⁹ Bruce Glasier, *The Peril of Conscription* (The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 7, *ILP/5/1915/41*, *LSE*, and *Militarism* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 4, *ILP/5/1915/41*, *LSE*.

permitted to introduce “franchise reform, Free Trade, Chartism, the removal of religious inequality, public education, factory legislation, and Trade Unionism,” into the British political landscape.⁶⁰ Arthur Ponsonby concurred with Glasier in *Parliament and Foreign Policy* (1915), noting that the waxing of democratic practice in mid-nineteenth century Britain brought with it the “rapid development of democratic institutions and a great increase in the control exercised by the people over legislation and administration”⁶¹ accompanied by an awakening of the working classes to what Glasier described as their “titanic might” as political actors through the advocacy of the Labour movement and the teachings of Socialism.⁶²

By the final decades of the nineteenth century, however, it began to dawn on the ruling classes that their relative reclusion from the inter-imperial scene had permitted their rivals to advance in strides and that, “if Britain wished to hold the first, or even the second or third place” in the developing “scramble for the world’s wealth” they were generating she would have to “work hard and perhaps even fight hard for it.”⁶³ To make matters worse, the rise of democracy in Britain had left the ruling classes “denuded almost completely of their political privileges” at home as well.⁶⁴ Out of “fear of losing the foremost place in the scramble for the world’s wealth” and the “desire... to regain political command over the democracy,” Glasier argued, a new “blood and iron theory of national greatness” was concocted by the true believers in the divine ordination of ruling

⁶⁰ Glasier, *Militarism*, p. 15.

⁶¹ Arthur Ponsonby, *Parliament and Foreign Policy* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915), p. 1, *ILP Pamphlets*, 328.61, PHM.

⁶² Glasier, *Peril*, p. 6.

⁶³ Glasier, *Militarism*, p. 16.

⁶⁴ Glasier, *Peril*, p. 6.

class supremacy at home and abroad and thrust upon the British people in the form of imperialist propaganda and the actual militarization of British society.⁶⁵

Glasier detailed the intellectual history of the 'New Militarist Imperialist' movement from the earliest enunciations of the doctrine that "war and the fitness for war are an integral portion of the conditions of creative advance: an essential part of the struggle for existence by which development proceeds" in the 1870's through to the "conscription agitation" in the name of British imperial supremacy emanating from Lord Roberts' National Service League and the Northcliffe press upon the outbreak of the war.⁶⁶ The theoretical key to the movement, he explained, was the assumption that the history of civilization had been characterized by a Darwinian struggle for racial advancement in which British Anglo-Saxon culture had long been the forerunner in a race for final global hegemony. Its organizational principle was the substitution of enforced militarism for civicism and democracy in the name of preparedness for the inevitable struggles expansion and the coercive 'civilization' of their inferiors must bring. Over the course of the nineteenth century, he illustrated with a series of quotations from academics, public intellectuals, statesmen, and the military,⁶⁷ how

the notion that Great Britain was predestined to be mistress of the modern world... [was] so deeply ingrained in the mind of the British people... that they were hardly conscious of being prepossessed by it... In much of our literature... our church prescriptions, our art... and our Imperialist orations, it is taken for granted that Great Britain is charged with the suzerainty of the seven seas and their adjacent continents... [and even] in the Children's 'Empire Day' song... the idea is instilled into the little ones that the earth is consecrated to the British

⁶⁵ Glasier, *Militarism*, pp. 16 and 19.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 18 and 22 and Glasier, *Peril*, pp. 1-4.

⁶⁷ These included, but were by no means limited to the 'New Imperialists' James Ram and Germanophobe J. A. Cramb, the 'racial imperialist' Dr. Karl Pearson, the 'spiritual imperialist' Harold Fraser Wyatt, the 'apocalyptic imperialist' Austin Harrison, and even the 'Anglo-Saxonist' American imperialist Theodore Roosevelt, as well as Joseph Chamberlain, Cecil Rhodes, Earl Rosebery, and A.J. Balfour.

race... they are asked to bow their head before the British flag, as formerly it was the custom to bow the head at the name of Jesus.⁶⁸

The chief purpose of such militarist conditioning, he argued, was the same everywhere it manifested itself. For all statesmen knew that the framework of their foreign relations was shifting from the pursuit and accommodation of territorial conquest to the prosecution of ever greater inter-imperial contests in which “the nation which devotes itself most whole-heartedly to the pursuit of war [would prove] worthiest to attain the greatest world power.”⁶⁹ It was no wonder, for Glasier, that the chief proponents of institutionalizing compulsory service in Britain, the “teeth and claws... [of] the New Militarism,” were also her most conspicuous imperialists and determined opponents of any movement to expand democracy in Britain.⁷⁰ For what was ultimately desired by the ruling classes of Germany, Austria, and Russia as it was by Britain, he argued, was a

sweated army... of men who have had no choice or will in becoming soldiers, who are paid coolie rates of pay and can be made to submit to the treatment of coolies... that can... be browbeaten by the military caste, and can in turn be used to browbeat the democracy... they want it for the war, and for after the war. They want it for their Imperialist schemes abroad; they want it for their class vanity and political interests at home.”⁷¹

The triumph of militarism in Britain had been made plain, for Glasier, by the eagerness of so many Britons to subject themselves to martial rule. The overwhelming military presence in Britain, formerly all but unknown unknown, now “everywhere meet[s] the eye,”

⁶⁸ Glasier, *Militarism*., pp. 22-24.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷⁰ Glasier, *Peril*, pp. 4-5. Glasier specifically mentions Lords Milner, Curzon, and Derby, the Duke of Wellington, Marquis of Ormonde, and Earls of Meath, Fitzwilliam, and Winchilsea to name a few.

⁷¹ Glasier, *Peril*, pp. 9 and 11.

One cannot walk down a street, or enter a tramcar, a theater, a church, or a railway station without meeting soldiers... it is as though some foreign rule had suddenly fallen on us... for as everyone who has travelled abroad knows, it is this very obtrusion of soldiery in public life that forms so marked a feature in Germany, France, [and] Russia ⁷²

Now that the road to global domination had finally been paved by the war, Glasier warned, Britain's militarist imperialists had less reason than ever to loosen their grip on the progress of democracy at home or abroad.

The keystone that had long kept the edifice of aristocratic rule in Europe from crumbling beneath the growing weight of democracy, however, many was not the making of domestic, but of foreign policy. For it was through foreign policy making that the constant fear of war between rivaling empires, along with the working class notion that foreign workers were enemies, rather than allies, had been maintained. It was no coincidence, therefore, as founding member of the UDC Arthur Ponsonby illustrated in *Parliament and Foreign Policy* (1915), that the "method and machinery used for conducting foreign affairs" in Britain was also the area of Government most stubbornly resistant to any form of democratization, remaining not only "not in harmony with the spirit of democracy" that had infiltrated most other areas of Government by 1914, but "still conducted on more or less the same lines as they have been for centuries past."⁷³ The most conspicuously "mediæval habits" characterizing the organization and practice of British foreign policy making, argued Ponsonby, were the strict limitation of applicants via an 'income test' and appointment system⁷⁴ to members of the 'ruling caste'

⁷² Glasier, *Militarism*., p. 1.

⁷³ Arthur Ponsonby, *Parliament and Foreign Policy* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915), p. 1. *ILP Pamphlets*, 328.61, PHM

⁷⁴ Candidates for the Foreign Office were required to make at least £400 a year.

in whose interests foreign policy was largely made⁷⁵ and the near total exclusion of any form of democratic oversight, rendering the Foreign Secretary master of an elitist cabal “freer from any sort of outside control than any other Minister.”⁷⁶

Following MacDonald and Thomas Johnston in setting the interests of the Empire in opposition to those of democracy, it made sense to dissenting writers that, as the primary tool of inter-imperial relations, the Foreign Office would prefer to keep its undertakings out of the glare of public opinion. “Secret Diplomacy,” was not only, as Johnston asserted, “the *finesse* of the business, the white magic... that keep[s] the audience mystified while the operator performs his tricks,”⁷⁷ but also the ‘blank check’ given to diplomatists by their Governments to pursue whatever agenda was desired to its fulfillment regardless of the consequences any real accountability would have entailed.⁷⁸ Citing a variety of conflicts that had beset the British people over the past two centuries, Johnston illustrated that war itself, colonial or inter-imperial, had long been considered an acceptable if not advantageous outcome of such negotiations.⁷⁹ As eminent philosopher and journalist Bertrand Russell argued in the UDC pamphlet *War: The Offspring of Fear* (1914), in the absence of such accountability, “when the Foreign Office desires to enter into a conflict, it can always, by selecting the facts to be revealed... make our

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4. That this was only the most extreme representation of the problem was conveyed by the ILP’s 1914 leaflet “Party Politics,” offering tables comparing the professions and occupations of the Members of Parliament to show that “the wealthy classes; representing under five million persons, hold eight out of every nine seats in Parliament, whilst the working classes, about 40 million, that is to say, eight out of every nine of the people in the country, hold one in nine of the Parliamentary seats.” ‘Party Politics,’ ILP “Coming-of-Age” Campaign Leaflet, no. 2, 1914. *ILP/5/1914/54*, *LSE*.

⁷⁶ Ponsonby, *Parliament*, p. 4.

⁷⁷ Johnston, *Secret Diplomacy*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Ponsonby, *Parliament*, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁹ Johnston, *Secret Diplomacy*, pp. 4-15.

intervention appear as a defense of the oppressed against oppression or attack.”⁸⁰ The path to the most recent war, Ponsonby asserted, had been no different, for “neither the decisions nor in the policy which led to the decisions was there the smallest exercise of any control by the people or their representatives.”⁸¹

With each and every belligerent thus free, as ILP Chairman F.W. Jowett phrased it, to “work in the dark... [until] the secret wire-pulling, bluffing, and huckstering of the diplomatists result in war,” only to later claim “to have struggled heroically and unselfishly for the preservation of peace,” there was simply no way for the British public to know what they themselves were fighting for.⁸² The universal practice among governments of presenting their own case for wars of their own making as unassailably just, argued Russell, posed a “great danger to humanity” in inevitably leading to the proliferation of an irrational hatred and fear of all peoples by one another, a “universal reign of fear” anchored in a paranoid “state of mind” that he described as “barbarous, contrary to reason, contrary to humanity, utterly contrary to self-interest, and a return to the savage beneath the miserable rags of a tawdry morality.”⁸³

Thomas Johnston voiced the consensus view of dissenting writers, as well as the heart of their critique of prewar political culture, in stating that,

Had the people of Germany and Britain and France and Russia known... that their lives, their liberties, their social aspirations were being gambled with... that treaties with secret clauses were being signed... that rival groups of financiers and concessionaries were quarrelling continually over the spoil of undeveloped lands,

⁸⁰ Bertrand Russell, *War: The Offspring of Fear* (Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 11, *Morel/F13/6/1, LSE*

⁸¹ Ponsonby, *Parliament*, p. 5.

⁸² F.W. Jowett, “Towards a Permanent Peace: The Case Against Secret Diplomacy,” *Labour Leader*, April 15, 1915.

⁸³ Russell, *Offspring*, p. 2.

and that time and time again the powder magazines were almost exploded and Hell let loose, Europe to-day would not have rocked as with an earthquake.⁸⁴

Moreover, as Glasier pointedly asserted, the British people were not informed of the dangers of their Government's foreign policy precisely because of their potentially negative response to it. For the advocates of the 'New Militarist Imperialism' clearly perceived "the feeling of repugnance to war and brutal conflict of all kinds [that] was taking a deep hold on the nation... with the growing enlightenment of the people and the spread of democracy" as a primary obstacle for their aims. They well understood, for Glasier, that "it was indispensable to the success" of their movement "that the commonly accepted idea that war is an evil, even if a necessary one, should be exploded."⁸⁵ From the beginning of the war, ILP and UDC writers complained bitterly that "one of the most difficult tasks at the present is to find out the real facts about the war and the causes which led to our being involved in it."⁸⁶ It followed that the enforced ignorance of Britons about their government's role in generating the war would carry over into the masking of its evolving aims in prosecuting it. "No statesman in Europe," wrote C.H. Norman in *Britain and the War* (1914), "has explained definitely what the objective of any country participating in the war really is,"⁸⁷ their own having consistently failed to go beyond what Clifford Allen described as "the cant of the British Empire with its stained honour and its clever confusion of its interest and its duty" in their calls to arms.⁸⁸ "So

⁸⁴ Johnston, *Secret Diplomacy*, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Glasier, *Militarism*, pp. 17-22.

⁸⁶ Independent Labour Party, *The Truth About the War* (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1914). ILP/5/1914/72, LSE.

⁸⁷ Norman, *Britain and the War*, p. 19.

⁸⁸ Allen, p. 25

long as the cleansing light of the sun falls sparingly on Foreign Offices,” MacDonald warned, “the game of bluff, squeeze, and gambling risk can be carried on.”⁸⁹

Reflecting back on the state of ignorance in which most Britons had been kept concerning the causes of the war upon its outbreak, his own included, then journalist for the *Daily Herald* William Norman Ewer would write in 1932 that, although “the man in the street in England could hardly have told you where Baghdad was or why... anyone should be concerned about it” for most of the war, “so far as Britain and Germany were concerned, was very largely a war over Baghdad and Iraq.” With the coming of the war, Ewer argued,

the Imperialist mind saw a vision of a great new Middle Eastern Empire--another India-- which should be Britain's prize of war... Not only would the seizure of the Middle East guard the routes to India, but the Middle East itself was to be a prize beyond calculation. The wealth of Mesopotamia... would in itself more than repay us the cost of all the war... The new Empire would spread from the Egyptian desert to the Indian frontier, and north to the Oxus and the Caspian... The British taxpayer is still paying today for the folly of the men who had that fantastic dream of Empire.⁹⁰

Although Ewer’s conception of the “megalomaniac dream” of empire was, of course, a bit of an exaggeration, it points up the dualistic nature of the anti-democratic tendencies of imperial government stressed by dissenting writers at the time. The British democracy, they believed, was being deceived by their government into fighting for the subjugation and exploitation of other peoples abroad on the pretense that they were, in fact, liberating them. Kept in the dark with the rest of the British public, dissenting writers could only have guessed that the Asquith administration had already begun

⁸⁹ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *War and the Workers* (Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 15, *Morel/F13/6/1*, LSE.

⁹⁰ W.N. Ewer, “Land of Empire Day-Dreams,” *Manchester Guardian*, October 4, 1932.

preemptively dividing the anticipated spoils of power and territory from Berlin to Bombay among their allies. But guess they did, and with a remarkable degree of accuracy. In the absence of concrete evidence, UDC and ILP writers organized their critiques around the probability that British inter-imperial policy would continue to trend toward its pre-war aims and in the anti-democratic manner in which its makers had grown accustomed.

For dissenting writers familiar with the intrigue and ambition that had characterized a century of Britain's imperial relations with her Allies, such as MacDonald, Morel, and Brailsford, there was no question that the war being waged was, as Brailsford put it, "a struggle for the hegemony of the Near East... [that] will end logically... in a melting of all the frontiers of the East, and the settlement by force of arms of the question whether its destinies shall be governed by Germany or Russia."⁹¹ The question was the nature of Britain's interest in a Russian victory if, in fact, Asquith had no intention of taking part in the spoils himself. Should the Russians be permitted by the British to finally take Constantinople, MacDonald pointed out, not only would her "enormously enhanced... prestige in the East... be [a] menace to all other Powers," but her brutal indifference to the inhabitants of those territories would surely "hasten into conflict all the big fundamental questions of race and colour which have been classed under the problem of East and West," sparking yet another sort of war between colonized peoples and their European conquerors.⁹²

Well before Germany had made its way into popular British literature as the evil 'other' against which Britain's nobler imperial mission was defined, the role had

⁹¹ Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 13.

⁹² Ramsey J. MacDonald, *War and the Workers* (Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 2. *LSE Morel F13/6/1*.

belonged to Russia, Britain's longstanding opponent for influence in the East.⁹³ From such popular novels as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and decades of coverage from the 'yellow press' on the intrigues of the so-called Great Game, Russia's 'historic mission' to possess Constantinople and ambitions in the Balkans and Persia would have been well known to many Britons by 1914.⁹⁴ However firm Asquith's commitment to ending the war with no more territory than he began it may have been, there was no question for dissenting writers that their Russian Ally had no such reservations. Asquith's willingness to go to war in support of a power widely known to be driven by interests as antithetical to his own aims for the war as Germany or Austria, dissenting writers near universally argued,⁹⁵ begged a closer inspection of what was, in truth, driving the British onto the field.

The ILP, for one, immediately identified Russia as "the most reactionary, corrupt, and oppressive Power in Europe" in questioning Asquith's choice of alliances.⁹⁶ Henry Brailsford reserved his criticism for Asquith himself in asking, "what man in his senses would have suggested that the best way to serve the cause of nationality was to bring fresh subject races under the Russian yoke?"⁹⁷ For even in the best case of a victory for the Triple Entente, Brailsford claimed, Russia would be empowered to wrest, at the very least most of the Balkan states from Austria, meaning that

they will pass from a higher to a lower civilization, from a system usually tolerant and fitfully Liberal, to one which has not even begun to grasp the idea of toleration, and whose answer to Liberalism is the censorship, the prison, and the 'truly Russian' pogrom.⁹⁸

⁹³ Silby, pp. 54-60.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* and Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, pp. 176-180.

⁹⁵ See for example, MacDonald, *War and Workers*, p. 4.

⁹⁶ Independent Labour Party, *The War in Europe: Manifesto of the Independent Labour Party* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1914). *ILP/5/1914/74*, LSE.

⁹⁷ Henry Noel Brailsford, *The Origins of the Great War* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 15. *Morel/ F13/6/1*, LSE

⁹⁸ Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 14.

Even on “the lower level of self-interest and Imperial expediency,” Brailsford inquired, “have we reason to desire a world in which the Balance of Power will lurch violently to the side of this unscrupulous and incalculable Empire?” Within a year of the peace, Brailsford prophesied, “as Russia forces her way through the Dardanelles, dominates Turkey, overruns Persia, and bestrides the road to India, our Imperialists will be calling out for a stronger Germany to balance a threatening Russia” and thus calling into being yet another global conflagration.⁹⁹

The fears of UDC and ILP leaders that a more aggressive prosecution of the war was, in fact, already in the offing were not abated by Asquith’s somewhat less liberal war aims addendum of November 1914 that British forces “shall never sheath the sword that we have not lightly drawn... until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed” and that, in aligning themselves with Germany, Turkish statesmen had “rung the death-knell of the Ottoman dominion, no only in Europe but in Asia.”¹⁰⁰ A hint of the policy implications of this announcement appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* on the same day, with the news that British operations off the coast of Mesopotamia, begun in secret a few weeks earlier, had

ceased to be a campaign for securing the head of the Gulf, for Basrah... has now been occupied... the main object of this campaign, no doubt, is to prevent Turkish troops in Mesopotamia from going to the assistance of the Damascus Corps... but the area of military activity also, no doubt, indicates the sphere of political interest that may be claimed by the Power conducting the campaign on the break-up of Turkey.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Brailsford, *Origins*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁰ *Times*, November 10, 1914.

¹⁰¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 10 1914.

The *Guardian's* observations and the concerns of dissenting writers could not have been more prescient, for the negotiations of the territorial spoils of that break-up had already begun.

It should be noted here that Asquith's initial commitment to limiting the scope of the war and the amount of territory occupied by British forces during its course is largely born out by the available evidence and the assessment of historians. As John Turner has argued, it was Asquith's stubborn fidelity to the Liberal principle of volunteerism that had obstructed a more aggressive opening prosecution of the war that, Asquith believed, would have hastened the need for conscription.¹⁰² Similarly, Edward David has argued that it was precisely Asquith's adherence to the belief "that the war was being fought to preserve certain established political beliefs... and that such principles should not be violated even in the cause of national victory" that would ultimately drive his Liberal opponents into alliance with those who believed "that all should be sacrificed to expediency in winning the war [and] that the end of victory was more important than the means used to achieve it."¹⁰³ Just as the UDC and the ILP had warned, however, it would be the legacy of balance of power diplomacy and the demands of inter-imperial alliances that would determine the course of the war and the nature of its settlement, not the lofty declarations of their Liberal Prime Minister.

As early as September 1914, Russia's traditional ambition to take Constantinople and fears of British and French duplicity had led Tsar Nicholas II to inform his allies of

¹⁰² John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict, 1915-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 56-61.

¹⁰³ Edward David, "The Liberal Party Divided 1916-1918," *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 3 (September 1970), p. 510.

his intentions to use the war to claim that city for his empire.¹⁰⁴ According to A. L. MacFie and Keith Wilson, although Grey would certainly not have welcomed the idea of an inter-imperial Europe dominated by an empowered 'Cossack Empire' expressed in dissenting propaganda, two other considerations took precedence in his policy decisions. For MacFie, Grey recognized that any deviation of Russian troops from the main Western front in a bid to take Constantinople before their British rivals beat them to the punch would have demanded an immediate compensatory increase in British recruitment and the threat of a manpower crisis his government simply could not afford. For Wilson, Grey's foremost concern was "that Britain remained an imperial power, and on good terms with the only great power that could threaten India, directly or indirectly" at war's end.¹⁰⁵ When Ottoman statesmen chose to align themselves with Germany in early November, Grey had little choice but to inform Russian Ambassador Alexander Benckendorff that, to the mind of the British government, "the conduct of the Turkish Government... [has] made a complete settlement of the Turkish question, including that of the [Dardanelle] Straits and Constantinople, in agreement with Russia inevitable... whether or not Turkish rule is overthrown in the course of hostilities."¹⁰⁶

When Russian statesmen solicited a guarantee from Grey that spring by way of a formal agreement to recognize one another's claims in the Ottoman territories after the war, along with those of France, Asquith was forced to acknowledge that, if "for one reason or another, because we didn't want more territory, or because we didn't feel equal

¹⁰⁴ Davis, p. 97.

¹⁰⁵ Keith M. Wilson, "Imperial Interests In The British Decision for War, 1914: The Defense of India in Central Asia.," *Review of International Studies* 10, no. 3 (1984), p. 199. See also, A. L. MacFie, "The Straits Question in the First World War, 1914-1918," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 19, no. No. 1 (January 1983): pp. 43-74.

¹⁰⁶ Even King George himself reassured the Russian ambassador in London that, in his view, "in regard to Constantinople, it is clear that it must be yours" at war's end. See A. L. MacFie, "The Straits Question in the First World War, 1914-1918," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 19, no. No. 1 (January 1983), p. 50.

to the responsibility, we were to leave the other nations to scramble for Turkey without taking anything for ourselves, we should not be doing out duty.”¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, on April 8 1915, Asquith appointed a Committee on Asiatic Turkey under the chairmanship of Maurice de Bunsen to ascertain the parameters of British desiderata in the region, their final report reflecting Asquith’s view that, despite their reluctance to do so, “events [had] passed beyond our control... compel[ling] us for good or ill to claim our share in the disintegrating Turkish Empire.”¹⁰⁸ Because British claims amounted to dominance in the Persian Gulf generally and because they were not at war with Persia, her territorial desideratum were in the *vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. Although the progress of British operations in the East would make the de Bunsen Committee Report a dead letter within a few months of its submission, its findings nevertheless corroborate the assumptions being made by dissenting writers about the ‘official mind’ of the government on the future of the Eastern Empire.

As the UDC and ILP had been warning from the beginning of the war, the de Bunsen Committee reported that claiming territory in the East was the only way to guarantee that it would not be claimed by enemy or ally alike at war’s end.¹⁰⁹ Echoing Brailsford’s depiction of the ‘war for the Empire of the East,’ the Committee stated that the Eastern Question was approaching its ‘final settlement’ during the war and that, as a result,

¹⁰⁷ Aaron, S. Klieman, “Britain’s War Aims in the Middle East in 1915,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 3 (July 1968), pp. 242-243 quoting from The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections, 1852-1927*, 2 vols. (Toronto 1928), II, 82.

¹⁰⁸ “British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia. Report, Proceedings and Appendices of a Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister, 1915,” p. 5. *CAB/27/1*, NA. De Bunsen Committee Report from here on.

¹⁰⁹ See UDC *Balance of Power*.

whether of zones of influence or of partition, certain areas will be claimed and absorbed by France and Russia. Whether these areas be large or small, they will in due course follow the inevitable law and extend beyond the limits originally assigned to them, if the territory beyond their borders is desirable in itself, and is in the hands of an incapable and stagnant administration. If therefore British administration ends, say at Kurna, the day will come when the real master of Baghdad and owner of Mesopotamia will be France or Russia, and once more the direct menace of a rival European Power will challenge our supremacy in the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁰

In defending Britain's right to hold influence in the Gulf, the Committee expressed even more clearly than the ILP's *Imperialism* (1900) or MacDonald's *Labour and the Empire* (1907) the purely self-referential or even tautological nature of British justifications for maintaining and expanding imperial rule. "Our claim to a share in settling the destiny of Asiatic Turkey," the committee asserted,

is valid because it springs from one of the cardinal principles of our policy in the East, our special and supreme position in the Persian Gulf. From that principle, and from the developments, often unconscious, of the policy necessary to maintain it, other claims and aspirations have arisen; but therein lies their justification.¹¹¹

The Committee held no illusions about the implications of dismantling the Ottoman Empire for Asquith's war aims or the duration and intensity of the war. The plan "to dismember most of Asiatic Turkey," they argued,

would mean prolonging the war far beyond the fall of Constantinople. At that moment we might be able to get a fairly satisfactory peace, but we should not get the Turks to yield Armenia, Cilicia, Syria, Mosul, and Mesopotamia, without further fighting... The character of the war would be changed.¹¹²

In order to minimize the political backlash of such a transition, the Committee recommended a scheme that would ostensibly be more in "consonance with the political

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹¹ De Bunsen Committee Report.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

theories of the Allies... [and] more consistent with our original attitude in regard to the war” than outright partition and annexation.¹¹³ Apart from a few areas of especial strategic interest, the five Ottoman provinces of Anatolia, Armenia, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq would become separate administrative zones with local governments under British oversight and protection.¹¹⁴ Such a scheme, it was determined, would guarantee the predominance of British influence in the regions while minimizing actual commitments of men or money and avoiding offending the national aspirations of Ottoman subjects where they existed. Moreover, they explained, even if the scheme collapsed completely,

there is always a good chance of there arising several autonomous States... under a nominal suzerainty of the Sultan... [which] it will be noticed... [will] correspond with the areas allotted... under partition or zones of interest [to the Allies]... we are thus favourably placed, in the event of the complete breakdown of the scheme, for securing our political and commercial interests, and indeed there seems no valid reason why the division of Turkey into these [zones] need necessarily preclude an understanding among the Allies as to the areas in which each of them claims to have special interests.¹¹⁵

On the very day the Committee on Asiatic Turkey was called into being, Charles Trevelyan decried the logic undergirding its findings in a *Times* article declaring that days of “Home Rule... iniquitous partitions... [and the imposition] of alien governments” that had characterized Britain’s imperial civilizing mission were coming to an end. It was, in fact, the very principles undergirding Asquith’s war aims, Trevelyan argued, that had accelerated the “craving for national development” among subject peoples the world over into formidable movements for national independence. Having already “demonstrably failed by every standard which regards the happiness and prosperity of the people as the true criterion,” Trevelyan insisted, the pretense of Home Rule or indirect

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19 and 25.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

colonial government had little hope of ever satisfying these renewed and expanded aspirations for recognition of nationality and independence among peoples who believed that Asquith's principle of nationality applied to them as equally as it did to Belgium or even the powers of Europe. The question now to be faced was whether the British people or their Government were "prepared to apply [their] principles universally." Trevelyan feared that the reverse was true, noting that "in the last few months the anti-liberal forces have been gathering strength," the *Times* now 'jeering' at the idea, once the beating heart of Britain's call to arms, that the war was being fought for the rights of small nations like Belgium and not for the postwar dismemberment and imperial absorption of the Central Powers.¹¹⁶

In *The War and the Far East* (1915), MacDonald pointed out that such aspirations were not limited to potential additions to the Empire, but extended to the peoples and territories already under its rule. In what read like a direct retort to Asquith's celebration of Indian imperial patriotism in his calls to arms, MacDonald referenced a variety of Indian newspapers reflecting the view that India had entered the fray at Britain's side not out of any real sense of imperial patriotism, but from the desire to realize its "dream of a restoration of nationalist and racial authority and a vindication of itself by force and in war... fighting on terms of equality with Western men."¹¹⁷ India's participation in the war, he argued, had fostered a popular awakening among Indians generally to their own sense of national identity, instilling "a 'new vision' of equality, and of an independence within the Empire won by service in the hour of need" and arousing "a 'new self-

¹¹⁶ *Labour Leader*, April 8, 1915.

¹¹⁷ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *The War and the Far East*, Labour and War Pamphlets no. 14 (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), p. 3. For a scholarly discussion of this argument, see Judith Brown "India" in William Roger Louis, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* Vol. IV (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 421-446.

consciousness” that had brought long held but “far off ultimates, ideals, [and] goals... down to immediate demands.”¹¹⁸ Although, as Asquith had emphasized, India did not hesitate to take up arms when called by the Empire, Indian journalists lamented that, even in the wake of such a gesture of solidarity,

England cannot get rid of the idea that ‘India has no future before her in the history of modern humanity except as a dependency of Great Britain,’ and that has prevented her from understanding the enthusiasm of Indian loyalty which claimed the right to serve an Empire in which it intended to be a self-governing part.¹¹⁹

In the face of such an expression of loyalty, maturity, and commitment to the ideals for which the British Empire ostensibly stood and entered the war to defend, asked MacDonald, “are we prepared to ask [India] to come and sit at the fireside of our Empire on equality with our own daughter States?” and, even further,

Is self-government the ideal of British rule? If it is, let there be a substantial contribution made to it now. Let the assumptions of a permanent ruling class, controlling the political destinies of a permanently subordinate people, disappear. Let the Indians be taken into the system of government as co-operating equals.¹²⁰

The price of failing to recognize this responsibility, he argued, would be dire. For “the greater the service which a subordinate State gives... the greater will be the energy... put into its demands for freedom.” The ‘hand of the bombmaker,’ he argued, would not be occupied with defending Britain’s imperial interests abroad forever.¹²¹

The failure of the British Government to recognize, let alone reward, the evident maturation of national ideals among its subjects with actual political rights was, of course, merely an echo of the long standing arguments of many dissenting voices about

¹¹⁸ MacDonald, *War and the Far East*, pp. 5-6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

the conditions of the working classes at the home. Just as Asquith had employed the example of Indian zeal to serve as a prod to compel the volunteerism of British nationals, so too did dissenting writers use the example of their aspirations for self-government to link the metropolitan struggles with ruling class domination to those taking place throughout the imperial periphery. In *Nationality and Patriotism* (1915), C.H. Norman emphasized “a plain contradiction between Patriotism and Imperialism” in principle.¹²² For, in addition to a common sense of national unity, an essential component of national existence, he argued, was the freedom from external impairment of that existence. At home, he argued, “the ruling classes... believe that their political existence depends upon militarism; their economic privileges upon the right of exploiting the labour and assets of the community,”¹²³ while abroad, the Empire has only proven its ability to “crush the nationalities composing it [and]... the attach[ment] of these peoples to systems of government which are repugnant to them” in a manner totally “contrary to the modern spirit of national self-government.”¹²⁴

With the debate over conscription already raging by mid-1915, Norman linked the conscription of life from British workers with the conscription of lands from colonized peoples in a cycle of imperial exploitation and oppression fueled by wars of conquest that benefited no one but the propertied ruling classes who invariably employed the language of patriotism and nationality to rally popular support for their exploits. What the war signified, for Norman, was the culminating blowback of centuries of ruling class aggrandizement at the expense of the lower classes now being called, once again, to

¹²² C. H. Norman, *Nationality and Patriotism* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 10, *ILP/5/1915/70*, LSE. On this topic, see Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge and Rochester, 1998), pp. 132-133.

¹²³ Norman, *Patriotism*, p. 7.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

defend them and the myriad peoples they had conquered. For as history had shown, “Imperialist domination eventually provokes an overwhelming combination against that nation which has been seeking to crush the world under its rule.”¹²⁵ Answering the call of imperial patriotism, he asserted, only empowered the very forces seeking to make war in the name of their own supremacy, the “enemy within the gate” that, “however desperately and courageously [the working classes] may fight any foreign foe... will not guarantee them any portion of British soil except the pauper’s grave.”¹²⁶ Using the example of the Irish, “a people whose nationality has been impaired by British rule,”¹²⁷ Norman noted that patriotism, or the “passion impelling a person to serve his country either in defending it from invasion... or in upholding the rights and liberties of the people... against tyrannical infringements,” compelled the Irishman to deny England, his oppressor, access to his personal service in protecting the very inter-imperial system that perpetuated and justified his oppression. Similarly, the true patriot and adherent to the principle of nationality, he argued, should also logically “applaud the efforts of the native inhabitants of Egypt, Ireland, the Indian races, the Cypriots, and the Maltese, to eject their British rulers,”¹²⁸ the “one belligerent that has had to meet an actual revolt among its subjects” over the course of the war.¹²⁹

The hypocrisy of the imperial patriotism expected by the ruling classes of their voiceless subjects, Norman argued, illustrated the connection between “the unhealthy system of class rule” at home and the “outstanding evil” of imperialistic militarism

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

abroad.¹³⁰ A genuine national experience was not available *anywhere* in the British Empire precisely because of the diversity of national spirit it, quite literally, sought to contain.¹³¹ Only “under an Empire organized upon autonomous principles of self-government and national freedom,” argued Norman, could the national spirit of such subjugated peoples as the Irish, Egyptians, or Indians “survive and... reach a high degree of development.”¹³²

At the ILP’s annual conference for 1915 that April in Norwich, its leaders were taking such sentiments to their logical conclusions in resolving to fight for “the ultimate abolition of the system of subject peoples” itself, broadly adopting from the recent resolution of the Conference of Socialists of Neutral Countries at Copenhagen the universal “recognition of the right of self-determination of the nations” and opposing “in the strongest way possible... every violent annexation at variance with the right of self-determination of the peoples.”¹³³ Going even further, the Conference declared its opposition even to “the system of establishing ‘spheres of influence’ or protectorates” calling on the people to demand that their government “refuse national support to the securing of contracts and concessions abroad” designed to promote the exploitation of the lands and peoples to which they pertained at the settlement.¹³⁴ This approach to the peace was being bolstered by its expression in other nations, as the *Guardian* illustrated in publishing the manifesto of the Committee of the Social Democratic Party in Germany

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-16.

¹³¹ Norman writes that, “one may be fairly confident that the diversity of races in the British Empire will prevent any permanent status of British citizenship being established on a recognised principle throughout the Empire... One cannot expect, short of a magical transformation, that the spirit of democracy and nationality, with all its healing balm upon racial antagonisms, could ever weld together the natural, religious, and racial differences between a Hindu and a Yorkshire miner.” *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³³ Independent Labour Party, *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Norwich April, 1915* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), p. 5 and 120.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

proclaiming its longstanding struggle “against the policy of Imperial expansion and its consequences” and “rais[ing] anew [its] sharpest protest against all efforts and declarations in favour of the annexation of a portion of a foreign country and the suppression by force of another people... the people desire no annexation. The people desire peace.”¹³⁵ In the months to come, other socialist and liberal organizations in Germany, France, and Belgium would add their voices against the introduction of expansionist war aims from their governments.¹³⁶ Hints of Britain’s own expansionist agenda continued to trickle in over the course of 1915 as well, most directly with the *Guardian*’s publication of the claims of the German Ambassador to Rome to have been privy to documents revealing that “the Near East is to be divided as spoils of war” with the Russians taking Constantinople and the Balkans while “the English will get Asia Minor, Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia reserving the right to expand her Egyptian frontier, and the Aegean Islands.”¹³⁷ Such rumors were given some credence by the tight control of the Government over any news concerning its ongoing campaign in Mesopotamia, of the which the *Guardian* regularly complained.¹³⁸ The duplicitous manner in which securing British control over the destiny of the Ottoman territories was being undertaken, however, reached well beyond even the most imaginative dissenting speculations on the government’s hidden agenda for the war.

Kristian Ulrichsen, has described the British occupation of Mesopotamia during the war as “the final fling of nineteenth-century colonial campaigning” and, indeed, the

¹³⁵ *Manchester Guardian* June 28 1915.

¹³⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, July 15 1915, January 28 and 26 1916, and July 1916.

¹³⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, July 15 1915.

¹³⁸ See for example, *Manchester Guardian*, September 30, 1915.

campaign reflected many of the aspects of Britain's colonial legacy enumerated by dissenting critics of imperialism.¹³⁹ For nearly a century, successive British governments had been enhancing their influence among tribal leaders in the Persian Gulf region generally as a counter balance to encroaching rival powers and the waning authority of the Ottoman government they had less and less interest in 'propping up'.¹⁴⁰ By the late 19th century, German ambitions to divert Britain's standing sea-lane trade route between London and the Levant, India, and Far East to an overland railway from Baghdad to Berlin were perceived by the British as an encroachment upon markets they had come to regard as exclusively their own.¹⁴¹ In *Secret Diplomacy, Capitalism, and War* (1915), Thomas Johnston pointed up this tension over influence in the Persian Gulf as a key factor in the alignment of British foreign policy against Germany. Once British diplomats, having long "been at the same game themselves, ... promptly smelled out the fact... that German Capitalists would be allowed to build the Baghdad Railway," Johnston argued, they responded precisely as the balance of power would have dictated, concluding an Anglo-Russian "agreement to 'protect' Persia" from German encroachment that effectively divided the region between them.¹⁴² At home, these

¹³⁹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914-1922," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 2007), p. 350.

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion of Britain's strategic policy of supporting the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Britain's European rivals in the region, see David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922*, 1st ed. (New York: H. Holt, 1989), p. 27. For their close attention to the tribes of the Persian Gulf states, see Anton Mohr, *The Oil War* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1976), p. 123.

¹⁴¹ W.W. Gottlieb, *Studies in Secret Diplomacy during the First World War* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), p. 22. Also see Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: Associated University Presses, 1994), p. 33; Philip Willard Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), p. 51; Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 66; and Aaron S. Klieman, "Britain's War Aims in the Middle East in 1915," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 3, The Middle East (July 1968), p. 237.

¹⁴² Johnston, *Secret Diplomacy*, p. 12. For a study of the Baghdad Railway in British policy see Stuart A. Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia: 1903-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976).

diplomatic developments were accompanied by the proliferation of propaganda characterizing Germany as a war-mongering behemoth, a propaganda move dissenting writers identified as well in line with trend toward militaristic preparation for a bid for global domination already in motion. For ILP leaders Philip Snowden and J.T. Walton Newbold, it was no coincidence that loudest voices for taking direct action against Germany over these issues were Britain's 'New Militarist Imperialists' and their associates in armaments manufacture seeking to profit politically and monetarily from the so-called 'Great German Naval Scare' of the early twentieth century.¹⁴³

A key concern of British statesmen about German ambition in the Middle East was the matter of access to Persian and Mesopotamian oil. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill had been convinced of the importance of oil to Britain's future naval supremacy for years by the time he brought Asquith around to the necessity of securing an independent supply in 1913.¹⁴⁴ In the months leading up to the war, the heavy handed manner in which the British Foreign Office attempted to force the concession of controlling interest in the Baghdad Railway project and the development of future oil production in the region seemed to confirm German suggestions and Ottoman fears that an era of British domination in the region was only just beginning.¹⁴⁵ When negotiations

¹⁴³ J.T. Walton Newbold, *How Asquith Helped the Armour Ring*, (Manchester and London: National Labour Press, LTD, 1914), p. 2-3 and 6, *ILP/5/1914/52*, LSE. Also see Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 16-17.

¹⁴⁴ For Churchill's obsession with British control of Persian oil, see Sara Reuger, "Persian Oil and the First Lord: A Chapter in the Career of Winston Churchill," *Military Affairs* 46, no. 3 (October 1982): 134-138.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of British interest in Mesopotamian oil in relation to the Baghdad Railway Project, see Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 31-48; For a discussion of oil as a factor in the origins of the First World War, see F. William Engdahl, "Oil and the Origins of the Great War," *History Compass* 5, no. 6 (2007); For an Ottoman perspective on the costs and benefits of British and German alliance in the months leading up to the war, see Mustafa Aksakal, "Not 'by those old books of international law, but only by war': Ottoman Intellectuals on the Eve of the Great War.," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol. 15, No. 3 (2004).

for that concession collapsed with the opening of European hostilities in the summer of 1914, Grey warned his Turkish counterparts that their only hope of surviving the war as an imperial power would lie in either neutrality or an alliance with the British.¹⁴⁶ Even as Grey's messages were being conveyed, however, British forces were already moving into the Persian Gulf in anticipation of a Turko-German alliance.¹⁴⁷ With British prestige, predominance of influence, and access to Persian oil all at stake,¹⁴⁸ as Ewer would reflect after some eighteen years of British occupation in Iraq in 1932, "it was natural enough the very moment Turkey trailed behind Germany into the war, Great Britain leapt with both feet on Iraq."¹⁴⁹

The expansion of what began as a limited holding operation on the southern coast of Mesopotamia into a full-blown occupation of the region was both a classic case of what MacDonald had condemned as 'man-on-the-spot imperialism' nearly a decade prior and prewar balance of power diplomacy tactics at the heart of dissenting critique.¹⁵⁰ Over decades of playing the Ottoman periphery against metropolitan authorities, British administrators had not only cultivated the loyalty of local tribal leaders but encouraged, indirectly and directly, the development of a network of grass roots Arab nationalist networks from Mecca to Cairo and Damascus.¹⁵¹ From the beginning of operations, Brigadier W. S. Delamain and Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' (IEFD) were ordered to keep the Amir of Najd and the Shaikhs of Muhammareh and Kuwait, well informed of

¹⁴⁶ Klieman, p. 238.

¹⁴⁷ Davis, p. 31.

¹⁴⁸ These are the three main reasons for the British occupation of Iraq according to Davis, pp. 31-33.

¹⁴⁹ *Daily Herald* Oct. 4, 1932.

¹⁵⁰ MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire*, pp. 39-42. See also Thornton, pp. 111-112.

¹⁵¹ For discussions of pre-war Anglo-Arab relations of this nature, see Ghassan R Atiyyah, *Iraq 1908-1921 A Political Study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973); James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, eds., *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997); and Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

their intended movements and to allow a favorable political situation on the ground be their guide in determining when and how far to advance in country.¹⁵² Perhaps driven by their own ambition, these long-standing Arab clients pushed the British to move inland, claiming that “the [IEFD’s] ability to make headway against the Turks without further delay would make all the difference in the attitude of the neighboring Arabs.”¹⁵³ Ottoman forces retreating in advance of the British, however, were taking the entire state apparatus of government and security with them, leaving massive vacuums of authority and services in their wake that the IEFD would have an increasing amount of difficulty filling. Nevertheless, in spite of the desperate conditions for local Mesopotamians created by their advance,¹⁵⁴ the campaign’s Chief Political Officer Sir Percy Cox reported his superiors in London in December 1914 that, to his mind, his instructions to ‘hang fire’ at Basra would surely lose the day. The time had come, he urged, to end Turkish rule in Mesopotamia once and for all by announcing publically that the British intended to make their occupation permanent and to expand that occupation up to Baghdad at the earliest opportunity.¹⁵⁵

The reluctance of London to permit such an advance was grounded in what Viceroy of India Lord Crewe referred to as “grave international considerations,” or the standing agreement among the Allies to put off dividing the spoils of war until after the victory.¹⁵⁶ It was no coincidence that the Cabinet finally agreed to expand the operation

¹⁵² Instructions to Delamain, Mesopotamia Commission Report, p. 13. See also, Davis, p. 54 and Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Iraq in World War I* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2006), pp. 84-85.

¹⁵³ Majd, p. 85.

¹⁵⁴ In this respect, Majd’s study is particularly illuminating for the insight offered by rarely used American consulate documents.

¹⁵⁵ Davis., pp. 54-55 and 57-58 and Majd, pp. 93-94.

¹⁵⁶ Davis, p. 56. For a discussion of the early Allied agreements concerning Turkish territory, see Atiyyah, p. 121.

in size and scope along the lines suggested by Cox¹⁵⁷ a mere fortnight after receiving the *aide-mémoire* from Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Dmitriyevich Sazonov in early March 1915 expressing the Tsar's intention to "scrupulously respect... the special interests of France and Great Britain... with reference to other regions of the Ottoman Empire," in exchange for Grey's recognition of Russian claims to Constantinople.¹⁵⁸ Accordingly, the Indian Expeditionary Force was reorganized as an army corps under the command of General Sir John Nixon, a commander "well known for his support for offensive strategy," according to David,¹⁵⁹ and given a new operations agenda that later investigations would deem "a landmark in [the campaign's] history" in sanctioning taking "complete control of the lower portion of Mesopotamia" and authorizing the development of "a plan for a subsequent advance on Baghdad."¹⁶⁰

From the summer of 1915 until the end of the war, the campaign in Mesopotamia would push northward toward Baghdad and Mosul with an almost brutal disregard for the trials and suffering of British and Indian troops or the desperation of Mesopotamians cut off from outside trade and service networks by occupation security measures.¹⁶¹ Like the policy decisions that had led to it, the horrors of the occupation were veiled, in both Mesopotamia and Britain, behind a screen of censorship and propaganda in which the 'salvation of ancient Babylon' was celebrated as the first great victory of the war.¹⁶² The

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of this expansion and its aims, see Davis, pp. 68-72.

¹⁵⁸ *Aide-Mémoire* from Russian Foreign Minister to British and French Ambassadors at Petrograd, 19 February/4 March 1915, in J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East; a Documentary Record* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1956), pp. 7-8.

¹⁵⁹ Davis, p. 68.

¹⁶⁰ Mesopotamia Commission Report *CAB/19/26, NA*, p. 16. Nixon himself would later testify that "the orders given to me when I was appointed to command were to take the offensive rather than remain on the defensive." quoted in Davis, p. 72.

¹⁶¹ See Majid, pp. 380-395.

¹⁶² Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 5.

righteousness of such an endeavor was belied, however, by the secret policy maneuvers undertaken to ensure a successful campaign both for the war and after. By 1915, British administrators throughout the Middle East had long been in quiet communication with representatives of an emerging Arab secessionist movement emanating out of Cairo and Damascus.¹⁶³ Although the British tended to view the aspirations of these men for a independent state comprising all Arabic speaking peoples as little more than the hopelessly grandiose ambitions of local headmen, the value of a pro-British pan-Arab uprising for the war and an alternative leadership nucleus for after the war became increasingly apparent the deeper British forces pushed into Arabic speaking territories.¹⁶⁴ Over the fall of 1914, the Foreign Office warmed up to the idea of an Arab revolt and sanctioned the opening of communications with the most promising candidate for leading it, the Sherif of Mecca Sayyid Husayn bin Ali al-Hashimi.¹⁶⁵ By the end of 1915, the infamous series of notes exchanged between High Commissioner of Egypt Henry McMahon and Sherif Husayn had more or less contracted an exchange of Arab force against the Ottomans for British recognition of an ambiguously defined Arab state at war's end.¹⁶⁶

Grey perceived, correctly, from the beginning of negotiations with Husayn that Paris would view them as a scheme to push France out of the Levant. French Ambassador to London Paul Cambon was, however, quick to perceive the opportunity of using the

¹⁶³ For discussions of pre-war British engagement with Arab nationalist movements, see George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000), pp. 126-127, and Atiyah, pp. 86-107 and 131; Westrate, pp. 12-13; and Davis, p. 63.

¹⁶⁴ Atiyah, pp. 86-107.

¹⁶⁵ As the guardian of the Islamic holy places in Mecca, Sherif Husayn held a great deal of authority locally and legitimacy as a representative of Arab interests throughout the Arab speaking world. His son Abd Allah bin al- Husayn had already communicated his father's willingness to discuss the terms for such action to Kitchener two years earlier. See Antonius, pp. 126-7 and Atiyah, p. 131.

¹⁶⁶ The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence is reproduced in Hurewitz, pp. 13-17 and Antonius, pp. 413-427. For a discussion of the correspondence, see Antonius, pp. 164-184.

agreement to ultimately gain “formal and official recognition of our rights to Syria.”¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, the British having appeared to be “in a panic” to “hold out a concrete goal Husayn,” according to Edward Fitzgerald, seemed to bode well for French aspirations in *la Syrie intégrale* in terms of “keep[ing] the maximum amount of territory outside the Arab kingdom and obtain[ing] the maximum number of privileges within the sphere of influence that will be assigned us,” in the view of Cambon’s assistant and interlocutor for the French for these negotiations, François Georges-Picot.¹⁶⁸ By the end of 1915, formal negotiations over the Allied division of territory in the Middle East were well underway between Picot and former British Consul at Istanbul Sir Mark Sykes. Unlike the agreement with Husayn, however, the negotiations between Britain and France would be quite specific, clearly designating the spheres of influence in which each would have the right to establish whatever form of administrative development they saw fit across the vast majority of Husayn’s imagined Arab state.¹⁶⁹

While the duplicitous tactic of guaranteeing British recognition of both Arab nationalist and Allied imperialist sovereignty in the contested territories of the Ottoman Empire was finding its formal expression at the end of 1915, so too was its opposition. However ignorant the dissenting left may have been of the actual negotiations, by the end of 1915, their efforts to obstruct precisely this sort of secret, balance of power diplomacy had, according to Robbins and Harris, begun to seriously “undermine the reputation of

¹⁶⁷ Cambon to Rene Viviani Oct. 21, 1915, quoted in Fitzgerald, p. 708.

¹⁶⁸ Fitzgerald, pp. 710-712.

¹⁶⁹ For a scholarly discussion of these negotiations, see Edward Peter Fitzgerald, “France’s Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918,” *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 66, no. 4 (December 1994): pp. 697-725. For the text of the resulting Tripartite (Sykes-Picot) Agreement for the Partition of the Ottoman Empire: Britain, France, and Russia, see Huweritz, p. 18-22.

the men who had taken the country into battle, and... discredit the official explanations for the war... [and] succeed in launching the idea of 'peace by negotiation'" in the United Kingdom.¹⁷⁰ As the above discussion has attempted to illustrate, a key component of dissenting propaganda was the case for imperial reform based on evidence of the corrupted legacy of the civilizing mission and the promise of a new era of peace through imperial democratization. The argument, inherent in this platform, that the Asquith administration's idea of 'imperial democracy' was little more than a contradiction in terms was given no small amount of credibility by the transition from a voluntary war effort in the name of liberation to a compulsory war effort in the name of territorial acquisition only beginning to make itself known in the spring of 1915.

Over the next two years, the dissenting left would gain an increasing amount of support for their campaign to force an 'Asquithian' peace on the British government. It would, in fact, be the government's unwillingness to openly declare its evolving aims for the war that would ultimately undermine its legitimacy as the expansionist policy tendencies discussed above gradually became known to the British public. As the preemptive division of the Ottoman territories among the Allied powers in particular became known in 1917, the dissenting leaders found themselves in an ideal position to capitalize on the public distrust of the government that had grown as the British war effort evermore closely resembled that of their militarist and expansionist enemies.

¹⁷⁰ Robbins, p. 68 and Harris, pp. 88-92.

Chapter 3: The Collapse of Legitimacy

In *War and the Workers*, one of Ramsay MacDonald's earliest publications for the Union of Democratic Control, the future Labour Prime Minister predicted an impending power shift in Britain in which the "reactionary interests" responsible for the outbreak of the war will have "added to their influence and power" through its prosecution while the demands of total war on the British people "shattered the foundation of the democratic mind and entangled the highways of democratic advance... [leaving] the democratic movement confused, broken and subverted" by wars end.¹ Not even MacDonald could have foreseen, however, that, less than a year into the war, such circumstances would have led to what Arthur Ponsonby described as "the end of the Liberal Party as we have known it."²

Although the causes of British Liberalism's demise have been debated by historians, most have agreed that it was during this period that its popular legitimacy as the main party of opposition to British Conservatism began to shift toward Labour and that such dissenting organizations as the UDC and the ILP played no small role in midwifing that transition.³ Indeed, the advent of Britain's first coalition government in May 1915, to which Ponsonby was referring, would mark the beginning of the end of the political relevance of the British Liberal Party for the duration of the century and beyond.

¹ Ramsay J. MacDonald, *War and the Workers* (Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 2. *Morel F13/6/1, LSE*

² John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict, 1915-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 62.

³ For a historiographical consideration of this debate, see Keith Laybourn, "The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate," *History* 80, no. 259 (1995): pp. 207-226. For the role of the dissenting left in reviving and unifying the Labour movement, see Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 147-169; Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge and Rochester, 1998), pp. 119-141; John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 24-59; Robert Edward Dowse, *Left in the Centre; the Independent Labour Party, 1893-1940* (London: Longmans, 1966), pp. 20-34.

The notion that the collapse of British Liberalism represented a triumph for the Labour movement, however, would have seemed incredulous to dissenting leaders, who tended to view the Labour movement's support for the war effort under Asquith and Lloyd George alike as proof of the extent to which the 'spirit of Prussianism' had colonized the political imagination of the British people. Although they would contribute to both, the goal of UDC and ILP leaders during the war neither the resuscitation of the Labour Party nor the destruction of the Liberal Party. Rather, as the self-proclaimed and sole party of opposition to the 'Prussianizing' effect of inter-imperial relations on British politics, dissenting leaders sought to re-invent the democratic movement in Britain as an engine for the democratization of the inter-imperial world as a whole, beginning with the metropolitan heart of its most powerful empire.

It has been a central argument of this dissertation that key figures in the postwar Labour movement established their political legitimacy during the war by demonstrating the illegitimacy, not of any one party, but of British imperial democracy itself as a system of government. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that, as two coalition governments struggled to make the transition from Asquith's defensive war to 'enthroned the public right' in Europe to a total war for Britain's imperial survival under Lloyd George, dissenting writers seized upon the 'extenuating necessities' of imposing universal conscription, occupying long-coveted territories, and the preemptive bartering of those territories for a new postwar balance of power as evidence they needed to prove that British imperial democracy had degenerated into the very engine of global domination they were, ostensibly, fighting to defeat. Just as the full extent and cost of the veiled expansionist agenda of the government was becoming known in Britain, largely through

the efforts and propaganda of dissenting leaders, the emergence of Woodrow Wilson as the global spokesperson for a negotiated internationalist peace and the anti-imperial turn of Russia under Bolshevik rule imbued the dissenting movement with new legitimacy. Although electoral evidence of Labour's triumph over Liberalism would not make itself apparent until the 1920's, dissenting leaders could, and did, claim to have prevailed over 'Prussianism' in Britain by the end of the war in having finally forced Lloyd George to publically adopt an internationalist, rather than an inter-imperialist, approach to ending the war and settling the peace in January 1918.

According to Keith Robbins, the greatest fear of dissenting leaders at the outbreak of the war was that the government would adopt an expansionist agenda without giving the Parliament or the people the opportunity to fully consider its implications for Britain's national interests or the future peace of Europe.⁴ An imperialistic agenda for the war, they believed, would surely prolong and intensify it as well as demand the imposition of compulsory measures bound to set the democratic movement back for a generation.⁵ Before the first calendar year of the war was out, pressure from opponents of Asquith's policy of containing the scope of the war to that which could be managed by a voluntary war effort alone had already begun to steer him into new theaters of war in the East where not only 'real military victories,' but strategic leverage in the final settlement of the new balance of power could be achieved. Although Asquith believed that compromising on his commitment to fighting a defensive war, rather than one for

⁴ Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), pp. 48-49 and 70-71.

⁵ See for example, MacDonald, *War and the Workers*; Bruce Glasier, *Militarism* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), *ILP 5/1915/40, LSE*; and C. H. Norman, *Nationality and Patriotism* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), *ILP/5/1915/70, LSE*.

imperial gain, would permit him to maintain his commitment to the principle of volunteerism as the basis of the war effort at home, his efforts to maintain a Liberal approach to an inter-imperial war would spell the end of his administration, his personal political relevance, and, indeed, his Party.

Initially, opposition to Asquith's commitment to a voluntary war effort had been tempered by the overwhelming number of volunteers he had managed to inspire. With those numbers flagging and no significant headway being made on any front of the war by Christmas, key members of Asquith's own Cabinet began calling for more direct state controls over production and enlistment at home and a fresh aggressive approach to prosecuting the war abroad by the New Year.⁶ As John Turner and Amanda Capern have shown, by January 1915, even Asquith had come to see that his purely defensive approach to the war was in need of revision.⁷ According to R. J. Q. Adams and Philip Poirier, however, Asquith remained convinced that the imposition of industrial and military compulsion an expanded war effort would demand would surely "split the Cabinet, split the House of Commons, split both political parties, and split the nation," creating a political crisis which his administration would not survive.⁸ For Turner, long-standing enemies of Asquith's 'New Liberal' approach to domestic politics were equally alive to such dangers for his administration and poised to force the issue as a means of ousting both him and his Party from government.⁹

⁶ Edward David, "The Liberal Party Divided 1916-1918," *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 3 (September 1970), p. 510

⁷ Turner, pp. 62-63 and Amanda L. Capern, "Winston Churchill, Mark Sykes and the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915," *Historical Research* 71 (February 1998), p. 111.

⁸ Quoted in R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), p. 16.

⁹ Turner, Chapters 2 and 3, especially pp. 56-61; Adams and Poirier, pp. 64-66 and 85-88; and R. J. Q. Adams, "Asquith's Choice: The May Coalition and the Coming of Conscription, 1915-1916," *The Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 3 (July 1986), pp. 243-263

Asquith's decision to revive Winston Churchill's scheme to take the Dardanelle Straits in early 1915 was a direct result of this political tension.¹⁰ The strategic advantages of a successful campaign, as Churchill had imagined it, were beyond question.¹¹ With one act of 'gun boat diplomacy' by his navy off the coast of Constantinople, Churchill argued, he could incite a disabling internal revolution in Turkey, open the supply routes to the Russian Front and expose remaining the Central Powers to attack from the South, and lay open the "glittering prize" of the territorial spoils of the Ottoman Empire for the taking "after barely a shot had been fired."¹² As I have argued above, Asquith initially scuttled the campaign out of fear that even its success would be interpreted by potential volunteers at home as a betrayal of his liberal aims for the war and by the still neutral Ottoman leadership and millions of Muslim subjects under British rule as a act of wanton imperial expansionism into the *Dar al Islam*.¹³ With his political principles now under siege from the opposite direction at home, conscription quickly becoming an unavoidable reality, and negotiations for the postwar division of Ottoman territories already underway, however, the Dardanelles Campaign began to seem less like political suicide for Asquith and more like a 'silver bullet' for his war effort, if not British Liberalism itself.

¹⁰ For a discussion of Churchill's initial proposal and Asquith's decision to scuttle it, see Chapter 2, pp. 12 and 13 above and Amanda L. Capern, "Winston Churchill, Mark Sykes and the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915," *Historical Research* 71 (February 1998): 108-118; David French, "The Origins of the Dardanelles Campaign Reconsidered," *History* Vol. 68, no. 223 (June 1983): pp. 210-224; and David French, "The Dardanelles, Mecca and Kut: Prestige as a Factor in British Eastern Strategy, 1914-1916," *War & Society* 5, no. 1 (1987): 45-61.

¹¹ As *The Times* pointed out shortly into the campaign on February 19, 1915. The strategic benefit of the surrender of Constantinople and the collapse of the Turkish war effort, the reopening of the Black Sea as a thoroughway for supplying the Russian Front, and the final alliance of neutrals, such Italy or the Balkan States with the Allied Powers would have been "scarcely necessary to point out."

¹² French, p. 216 and Capern, pp. 111-116.

¹³ See Chapter 2, pp. 13 and 14 above and French, p. 50 and Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 12-15.

Once in the hands of military planners, however, the campaign quickly evolved to include a full-scale Eastern assault that would require the transition to a compulsory war effort at the outset.¹⁴ Utterly contrary to Asquith's intention to use the campaign to save his administration from the political fallout conscription would surely bring, the already beleaguered Prime Minister refused to sanction the troop deployment that even Churchill had come to view as crucial to the campaign's success.¹⁵ When the campaign, begun in February, collapsed into a prolonged pitched battle over the spring of 1915 with casualties reaching into the tens and, eventually, hundreds of thousands, Asquith's enemies, rightly so for Amanda Capern, held him, and his principles for the war, personally responsible for the catastrophe. Nevertheless, Asquith continued to obstruct the transition from a voluntary to a compulsory war effort that, for most statesmen, was quickly becoming an obvious inevitability.¹⁶ By May, however, it had become clear to Asquith that his 'silver bullet' had failed to hit the mark. Faced with Liberal and Conservative leaders alike struggling to contain backbench revolt in lieu of his resignation, on May 15 Asquith acquiesced to Lloyd George and Bonar Law's suggestion of a coalition government in the name of preserving the unity of the nation, the Parliament, and even his own Liberal Party.¹⁷

For dissenting leaders, the Asquith coalition was not merely a confirmation that 'anti-Liberal' forces were gaining power and influence as a result of the war, as

¹⁴ Such expansionist designs were emanating from First Sea Lord Sir John Fisher. For a consideration of these plans, see A. L. MacFie, "The Straits Question in the First World War, 1914-1918," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 19, no. 1 (January 1983), pp. 52-53 and John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict, 1915-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 57.

¹⁵ Capern, pp. 111-114, MacFie, pp. 52-53, and Turner, p. 57.

¹⁶ Adams and Poirier, pp. 75 and 77-78; Turner, pp. 58-61; and Edward David, "The Liberal Party Divided 1916-1918," *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 3 (September 1970), p. 510.

¹⁷ Turner, pp. 58 and 61; Adams and Poirier, pp. 77-78.

MacDonald and Charles Trevelyan had warned,¹⁸ but as Ponsonby expressed it, “the end of the Liberal Party as we have known it.”¹⁹ For it was not merely Asquith, but the principles of British Liberalism that were being called into question by the administration’s new partners. It was only a matter of time, Ponsonby privately lamented to Trevelyan, before those partners would use their position to impose the coercive state controls the needed to fight the expansionist war they wanted.²⁰ Moreover, the dwindling of Parliamentary opposition to such measures meant that dissenting writers could expect a far more vigorous campaign by the state against their efforts to protect British citizens from their long-term implications.²¹

Nevertheless, dissenting leaders were also alive to the advantages the coalition held for their movement. As one disillusioned member of the Liberal party expressed to Trevelyan, the many Liberal critics who had been hesitant to call out their leaders for fear of undermining the legitimacy of their party would now “revel in the new sense of freedom [the coalition] gives us all... [for] no one on earth can pretend that we were elected to support this Government.”²² Trevelyan agreed, and commented that the very goal of conscripting Britons for a more aggressive and expansionist war effort would “fill with disgust and indignation numbers of Liberals and Labourmen, who will never again look to their leaders who force it upon them as people fit to lead.”²³ UDC leaders were particularly hopeful that the well-known hostility toward conscription among even pro-

¹⁸ See for example, Trevelyan in the *Labour Leader* April 8, 1915; MacDonald, *War and the Workers*, pp. 1-3; and Union of Democratic Control, *The Morrow of War* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1914), p. 14, *LSE Morel/F13/5/1*.

¹⁹ Turner, p. 62.

²⁰ *Ibid.* and Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 66-67.

²¹ Swartz, pp. 68-69 and 235-237.

²² The words are R.D. Denman’s, quoted in Swartz, p. 66.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

war Labour movement representatives would now steer local Trade Union and Labour councils back into friendlier relations with the theretofore ostracized ILP and through it, the UDC and pro-peace movement as a whole.²⁴

Seeking to maximize the benefits of their new position as the leading alternative to what they viewed as an increasingly alienating and 'Prussianistic' trend in British government, UDC and ILP leaders launched a coordinated 'peace initiative' in the immediate wake of the coalition comprised of a series of national speaking tours covering over 16,000 miles in which thousands of leaflets, pamphlets, books, articles, and periodicals were distributed to as of yet untapped local trade councils and Labour party groups around the United Kingdom. By mid-fall, the goal of unifying the disparate elements of dissent into a single movement under the UDC/ILP banner²⁵ had effectively doubled the number of Labour organizations affiliated with the UDC, raising of its overall membership to over 300,000.²⁶ In their efforts, I argue, dissenting propagandists were given a significant boon by the tendency of pro-compulsionist statesmen to react to the coalition, the failures in the Dardanelles, and the rise of the pro-peace movement in precisely the anti-democratic and imperialistic manner the dissenting left had predicted they would.

Statesmen already convinced of the immediate necessity of more compulsory measures for an expanded war effort were sorely disappointed to find themselves kept as

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-237. For Trade Union views on conscription at this time, see Adams and Poirier, pp. 114 and 115.

²⁵ Swartz, p. 59-60, 90 and 236 and Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914-1918* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996), p. 83.

²⁶ Robbins, p. 68 and Harris, pp. 88-92.

“muzzled, uninformed, and impotent” by Asquith as they had been before May 15th.²⁷

Even statesmen not fully committed to a compulsory war effort before the coalition, however, were beginning to recognize the utility of the issue as a means of ousting the inert and yet seemingly immovable Asquith.²⁸ It was no coincidence that, as Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey privately noted, the “people who want compulsory service don’t want Asquith, while those who want Asquith don’t want compulsory service.”²⁹ By standing so firmly on the issue, Asquith himself had made the case for compulsion a case against the efficacy of his own Party principles and not only in relation to his management of the war.

A few weeks into the coalition, South African High Commissioner-cum-Tory statesmen Lord Alfred Milner wrote a letter to the editor of the *Times* leaving little doubt of his view that victory would be impossible without immediate and direct state control over recruitment and munitions production and that the flagging British war effort was a direct result of a lack of firm leadership from the Asquith administration. Milner gave voice in his letter to the suspicion, shared by many pro-compulsionist statesmen according to David Silbey,³⁰ that an untapped pool of thousands of able-bodied ‘shirkers’ had been denying their government its right to their service. He defended these men, however, as having been “unjustly denounced as ‘slackers,’ or ‘cowards,’ when they are simply ignorant, or bewildered... or sorely puzzled to choose between conflicting duties” to their families and their nation. How could they discern the dire need for their service,

²⁷ Adams and Poirier, pp. 64-66 and 85

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 64 and 88.

²⁹ Adams, p. 263.

³⁰ David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916* (London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 30. See also Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), Chapters 4 and 5.

asked Milner, when everyday they see all around them “others similarly situated, or who could join the colours at a much smaller personal sacrifice, stay at home.” For what these men suffered, Milner argued, was not a lack of patriotism or bravery, but a lack of leadership. Even in the case of “the ‘real slacker’... the man who obviously ought to go and has no reasonable excuse for shirking,” he asked, “does it lie in their mouths to reproach him, who are themselves so slack that they are afraid to compel him to do his duty, though they have the power?”

The voluntary system so tenaciously clung to by Asquithian Liberals in the name of preserving “our famous... ‘liberty of the subject’” was, for Milner, “a clumsy and inadequate instrument” at best, if not “the root cause of nine-tenths of the hitches, delays, and blunders” of the war effort which Asquith, nevertheless, remained “afraid to discard.” As it stood, the voluntary system had already begun to denude the nation of its most patriotic, heroic, and courageous men while permitting “only men of average or inferior spirit and sense of duty to carry on the race.” State control, in contrast, could be more organized and selective in calling out “men whose greatest value is as soldiers in preference to those who can contribute more to the successful conduct of the war in a civilian capacity.” In short, he argued, “the State ought not to be obliged to tout for fighting men. It ought to be in a position to call out the number it wants as and when it wants them, and to call them out in the right order... and the nation is ready to obey the order. It only needs the captain on the bridge to give the signal”³¹

Despite Asquith’s reluctance to give that signal, the coalition’s new Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George had already begun transitioning domestic production for

³¹ *Times* May 27 1915.

the war effort into what Adams has called “the greatest experiment in state control in British history to that time.”³² Lloyd George’s efforts to put British labour more tightly in the harness for the war effort at home over the summer and fall of 1915 were paralleled by those of Walter Long, a leading pre-war voice for compulsory military training from the Tory benches, to rally statesmen behind a national registration program that, they hoped, would midwife conscription into being as well.³³ By October, Long’s efforts had resulted in a report claiming that well over two and a half million eligible Britons had yet volunteered for service.³⁴ The news was unfortunately preceded by a series of catastrophes in the Dardanelles and Loos over the fall involving the loss of thousands of British troops.³⁵ Faced with such an alignment of forces and facts against him, according to Adams, Asquith finally began the gradual climb down from his opposition to conscription that would result in the passage of Britain’s First Military Service Act in January 1916 calling forth all unmarried men between the ages of 19 and 41.³⁶

The threat of conscription, of course, had been at the forefront of dissenting propaganda from the beginning of the war. When volunteerism began to wane and compulsion to loom ever more threateningly, UDC and ILP writers were already mobilized to come to the defense of conscious objectors. In contrast to Milner’s conception of the ‘bewildered and ignorant shirker,’ dissenting writers characterized the trailing off of volunteers as part of a political awakening spanning the full scope of the

³² Adams, pp. 247-248 and Adams and Poirier, p. 93-94.

³³ Adams and Poirier, pp. 94-96.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98 for description.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5

British Empire. With the waning of the 'war psychosis' by the New Year, they believed, the "people were beginning to think again" and not just about the trials of the war.³⁷

Rather, the expanded scope of the war and the looming threat of conscription was inspiring would-be volunteers to think harder on precisely what fighting for British supremacy in a new balance of power would get them as national and imperial subjects. The perceived persistence of prewar attitudes opposed to the expansion of political or economic opportunity, argued dissenting writers, portended that, despite their great sacrifice, they would get very little.

As Philip Snowden pointed out in Parliament and the subsequent publication of his speech in the ILP pamphlet *Who is to Pay for the War?*, the surge of volunteerism from the working classes had in no way shifted the government's tendency to privilege the interests of business and the ruling classes in their favor. In his speech, Snowden criticized Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George's decision to impose a 30% hike in taxes on common commodities to pay for the war effort as both impractical and inequalitarian. A flat rate tax, he argued, ignored the vast gap in income across the classes with the result that those already hardest hit by the war would be paying the most in relation to their overall income while more wealthy Britons were required to sacrifice a mere modicum of luxury.³⁸ Moreover, while the government was taking out foreign loans to keep up with the costs of supplying the war effort, the very British industries being paid through those loans were seeing record profits. Why, he asked, had the

³⁷ Robbins, p. 68.

³⁸ Snowden calculated that the average wage-earning household would now be paying nearly a third of its yearly expendable income in taxes. Philip Snowden, *Who is to Pay for the War?* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 2. *LSE ILP/5/1915/72*

government chosen to break the very backbone of the war effort to obtain the one resource they did not have when it was so readily available elsewhere?³⁹

In his reply, Lloyd George merely disparaged Snowden's arithmetic and chided him in suggesting that, "You cannot go into a great war and say to the vast majority of the people of this country; 'You need not give up anything'".⁴⁰ As the foremost contributors of both money and men, Snowden rejoined, the wage-earning classes were, in fact, being asked by the government to give up everything. The question that Lloyd George refused to face, for Snowden, spoke to the very heart of British socialism's *raison d'être*. "Is it right," he inquired, "that some people should be left with an enormous spending power after their taxation is paid, while other people are taxed on wages and income which are insufficient to provide the necessities of life?"⁴¹ That those in power continued to believe it was, for Snowden and others, was an illogic reflective of an archaic and yet persistent ruling class tendency to perceive people that did not own property as being property themselves.⁴²

Moreover, the scope of the war was being expanded, deliberately in the view of dissenting writers, to include the destruction, occupation, and dismemberment of the Central Powers in the name of British inter-imperial supremacy.⁴³ Of all British people, argued C. H. Norman in the ILP pamphlet *Nationality and Patriotism* (1915), the wage-earning classes were best positioned to see the inherent opposition of national and inter-imperial interests. For despite the success of British governments in expanding the reach

³⁹ Philip Snowden, *Who is to Pay for the War?* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 14. *LSE ILP/5/1915/72*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴² For a discussion of the perception of individuals as property in relation to the war, see Clifford Allen, *Is Germany Right and Britain Wrong?* (Lawrence Mansions, 1914). *ILP 5/1916/3, LSE*

⁴³ Asquith had, of course, said as much upon Turkey's declaration of alliance with the Central Powers in November 1914.

of British imperial influence to some twenty times the size of the British Isles in half as many years, “the housing problem [has remained] as acute as ever, and the British workman has not benefited by these expansions of the Empire, though he has played a great part in depriving the owners of [their territories].”⁴⁴ The increasingly belligerent attitudes taken up by British statesmen and the pro-war press, argued Norman, only demonstrated how little the immense sacrifice already being made by the working classes meant to their government. As a result, he argued,

the reluctance to enlist which has been exhibited in many parts of Britain, apart from the growth of a deep-seated conviction that all wars are vulgar and immoral, has been partially caused by the knowledge, which is slowly dawning on the British masses, that... [even] supposing Britain conquered and occupied Germany, not the slightest benefit would accrue to the British workman.⁴⁵

Even more acutely aware of the opposition of national and imperial interests than the British working classes, of course, were British imperial subjects. As MacDonald’s ILP pamphlet *War and the Far East* (1915) pointed out, the reluctance to volunteer was evident even among Asquith’s most celebrated imperial patriots, the armies of British India, and for reasons quite similar to those of the working classes. Quoting a variety of Indian newspapers, MacDonald conveyed the frustrations of Indian subjects with the government’s unwillingness to view their volunteerism as any indication of their political maturity. As the *Bengalee* had explained, “While the war is slowly dragging its wearied and murderous steps from week to week... the loyal enthusiasm that it evoked at its

⁴⁴ C. H. Norman, *Nationality and Patriotism* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 8, *ILP/5/1915/70*, *LSE*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

commencement in this country... has been waning among all sections of the community.”⁴⁶ The reason for this waning, the *Bengalee* continued, was that

spokesman of the Indian Bureaucracy and the Anglo-Indian community in the Press have now told us, almost in plain English, that our men fighting for their King-Emperor at the front are mere mercenaries whose fighting value is not indigenous and Indian, but being entirely due to the training of British officers... [and that] India has no future before her in the history of modern humanity except as a dependency of Great Britain.⁴⁷

It was no coincidence that Lord Milner was not only the type of Tory imperialist statesmen, but the very man ILP writers like Bruce Glasier had predicted would lead the charge to impose compulsory measures upon British citizens and subjects as a means of suppressing precisely such sentiments.⁴⁸ Milner, perhaps foremost among men of his ilk, had been well trained in the art of subjugating men in the name of expanding and enhancing British imperial domination over his long career in the imperial periphery. In addition to being “among the most insistent of Conscriptionists,” as Glasier pointed out, “Lord Milner was also, characteristically enough, the man above all others responsible for the introduction of Chinese slave labour into South Africa.” Similarly, “Lord Curzon,” also a staunch compulsionist for Glasier, “is chiefly remembered for having during his term of office as Viceroy of India nearly caused a rebellion in Bengal by his repressive policy.”⁴⁹ For men of this mind, argued Glasier, the war was an ideal opportunity to obtain at home what they had so masterfully orchestrated abroad,

a sweated army... of men who have had no choice or will in becoming soldiers, who are paid coolie rates of pay and can be made to submit to the treatment of

⁴⁶ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *The War and the Far East*, Labour and War Pamphlets no. 14 (London: Independent Labour Party, 1915), p. 8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Milner is mentioned by name in this context by Bruce Glasier, *Resist the Foreign Yoke of Conscription!*, ILP “Coming of Age” Campaign Leaflet, no. 7. (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1914). *LSE ILP/5/1914/33* and in Bruce Glasier, *The Peril of Conscription* (The National Labour Press, LTD., 1915), p. 9. *ILP 5/1915/41*, *LSE*.

⁴⁹ Glasier, *Conscription*, p. 5.

coolies... they want it for the war... they want it for their Imperialist schemes abroad... they want it for their class vanity and political interests at home.⁵⁰

The imagery of the transformation of the British working classes into ‘coolie slaves’ spoke directly to the dissenting contention that the civilizing mission of the British Empire had begun to achieve its own antithesis with the war. Rather than using the Empire to channel the democratic progress being made at home onto less developed peoples, it had done the reverse in forcing ‘free-born Britons’ into the imperial harness in the name of inter-imperial domination. As MacDonald, Norman, and others had noted from the beginning of the war, the efficiency with which the exigencies of inter-imperial war had subjugated and even destroyed the progress of democratic movements was such as to suggest that the war had been manufactured as “a deliberate scheme by the ruling classes of Russia, Britain, Germany, and, to a lesser degree, France, to engulf democratic progress and economic reform in oceans of blood.”⁵¹ It should come as no surprise, I argue, that, as the future of an idealized imperial democracy grew ever darker beneath the clouds of total inter-imperial war, the level of public commitment to Asquith’s “enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea of European politics” demand from the government by dissenting leaders would grow ever more extreme in direct proportion.

Toward the end of 1915, dissenting activism had begun to pay noticeable dividends in terms of public support for the idea of a negotiated peace.⁵² By every account, public frustration with the humiliating defeats of 1915, rising casualty rates, and

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

⁵¹ MacDonald, *War and the Workers*, pp. 1-2 and Norman, *Nationality and Patriotism*, p. 15.

⁵² Harris, pp. 120-121 and Swartz, pp. 149-150.

the looming threat of conscription had translated, as dissenting leaders hoped it would, into more public support for the peace movement generally, even from the primarily pro-war Trade Unions.⁵³ With affiliations, and supportive crowds, growing, E. D. Morel, for one, was confident that Britons were coming to see the “indissoluble connection” between foreign policy and domestic problems dissenting writers had been popularizing from the outbreak of the war.⁵⁴ As Harris, Swartz and others have shown, dissenting leaders tightened the frame of their propaganda accordingly to reflect a clear and unified program for the peace that their growing support base could mobilize behind.⁵⁵ Historians have given less emphasis, however, to the broadened scope of compulsory limitations on inter- and intra-imperial policy that, I argue, lay embedded within that program.

On February 23, 1916, just a few weeks after the announcement of the First Military Service Act, UDC and ILP leaders Snowden, Trevelyan, and Ponsonby challenged the government’s request for an additional £400,000,000 in war credits⁵⁶ with an unprecedentedly bold critique of its fidelity to Asquith’s original aims for the war in Parliament. Throughout the debate, Snowden, Trevelyan, and Ponsonby repeatedly emphasized “the noble ideal set forth by the Prime Minister in his Dublin speech of a real European partnership based upon the recognition of equal rights, established and enforced by the common will” as foremost among “the wholly disinterested motives

⁵³ See for example, Harris, p. 120; Swartz, p. 70-75 and 147-14; and Robbins, p. 93.

⁵⁴ Swartz, p. 150.

⁵⁵ The program for a negotiated peace was drafted at a UDC Executive Committee conference attended by Liberal and Labour leaders and formulated around the principles of C.R. Buxton’s ‘Terms of Peace’ and H.R. Brailsford’s ‘A Peace by Satisfaction.’ Harris, pp. 120, 122 and 134-5; Swartz, p. 70-5; and Robbins, p. 93.

⁵⁶ This credit would bring the total to over £2,000,000,000.

which have prompted the people of this country to support the War.”⁵⁷ For Snowden, the notion that such an ideal could be achieved through “that undefined, and to me incomprehensible, something which is indicated by the crushing of Germany” that had recently pervaded the government’s pro-war rhetoric was nothing short of “sheer madness.”⁵⁸

Quoting a variety of international journals, Snowden and Trevelyan juxtaposed the loose talk of British statesmen in the popular press about destroying and partitioning enemy territories⁵⁹ with the view that even Germany not only “wishes for peace” but that “this wish is not limited to the social democrats... [and that an] increasing number... are ready to make peace ‘without annexations’.”⁶⁰ If, Trevelyan reasoned, Asquith was, as he himself had said, “ready to discuss proposals of a serious character for a general peace,” and if he remained committed to his original aims for the war, the growing conviction “that we are out on a policy of conquest and aggression... can be easily made good.”⁶¹ All that was required, Snowden and Trevelyan insisted, was for Asquith to “translate into more definite and precise language his Guildhall speech,” in which his aims were originally expressed,⁶² and to put those aims “into some kind of concrete proposal and held up to Europe, in lieu of the rather vague declarations about the crushing of Germany.”⁶³

⁵⁷ Speeches on February 23, 1916 *Hansard's* vol. 80. cc. 714 and 719. For other examples, see cc. 732 and 741.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, cc. 718 and 719.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, cc. 719 and 729-730.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, cc. 722-725 and 728. The quoted phrase is from cc. 728.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 731-732.

⁶² *Ibid.*, cc. 725

⁶³ *Ibid.*, cc. 732. Also, see Harris 134-137.

In his reply, Asquith merely disparaged the political legitimacy of dissenting opinion.⁶⁴ His reply to their demand that he state his aims for the war, however, was nevertheless telling for its omission of his call to arms speeches in favor of his declaration, three months and nearly 900,000 volunteers into the war effort, that

‘We shall never sheath the sword, which we have not lightly drawn, until Belgium—’ and I will add Serbia— ‘recovers in full measure all, and more than all, which she has sacrificed, until France is adequately secured against the menace of aggression, until the rights of the smaller nationalities of Europe are placed upon an unassailable foundation, and until the military domination of Prussia’— this is the language I used— ‘is wholly and finally destroyed.’⁶⁵

Ignoring completely the contrast, for his dissenting detractors, with his earlier speeches, Asquith asked with wry derision, “what is there wanting in clearness or directness in this language? How can I make it more full? How can I make it more intelligible?”⁶⁶

Obliging the Prime Ministers rhetorical request, Ponsonby suggested that he openly support the universal interdiction of annexation at the peace. For “it is not the supremacy of Great Britain that I believe any of us desire,” he reminded Asquith,

It is the peace of the world... I maintain that the policy of aggressive German militarism is annexation... If by our terms of peace we defeat that and we prevent annexation of any invaded territory, then I say we have defeated the policy of German militarism.⁶⁷

This simple gesture of good faith on the part of Asquith was, however, not so simple as his detractors alluded. The new Concert of Europe the Asquith administration had been working to build was, by and large, a renewed balance of power characterized by the

⁶⁴ Speeches on February 23, 1916 *Hansard's* vol. 80., cc. 734. -737. His exact words were “I should not like it to go forth to the world that the two hon. Gentlemen, to whom we have listened with well-deserved consideration, are the spokesmen of any substantial body of opinion in this country. I doubt very much whether either of them speaks for his own constituents. I am perfectly certain that they do not speak for the democracy of Great Britain.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, cc. 734. -737.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, cc. 734. -737.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, cc. 739-741.

same sort of secret diplomacy and policies of conquest that dissenting writers believed had generated the war to begin with. The British government had already formally promised to recognize various spheres of influence among its allies throughout the territories of the Central Powers. Moreover, hundreds of thousands in British lives and sterling had already been shed over their occupation including Britain's own share stretching from the Persian Gulf into the heartland of Fertile Crescent. By 1916, even restating aims that had formed the very foundations of Britain's cause for the war had become, for Asquith, politically untenable. His reluctance to do so, followed by that of his soon-to-be successor, Lloyd George, I argue, merely fueled the demand from dissenting propagandists that the aims not only be stated, but codified into a new regime of international law and embodied in a formal League of Nations.

Despite the appearance of the idea of a 'United States of Europe' in the earliest wartime publications of the ILP and UDC,⁶⁸ there is an historiographical consensus that most pro-peace British Radicals, Liberals, and Labourites, and specifically UDC leaders, as John Callaghan put it, "were not really interested in a League of Nations."⁶⁹ One reason for this consensus is that, as Henry Winkler has shown, dissenting writers tended not to develop their conceptions of the League into specific plans for a functional international institution. Nevertheless, I contend that Winkler's conclusion that this shortcoming reflected the Labour movement's traditional "indifference to the world of diplomacy and foreign policy" misreads the function of the idea of the League of Nations

⁶⁸ See, for example the ILP's, *Manifesto on the War* (1914) and the UDC's first statement of purpose in the *Manchester Guardian*, September 14, 1914.

⁶⁹ See, for example, John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 30-31 and Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), pp. 54-55.

in dissenting propaganda.⁷⁰ Like most of the dissenting left's peace demands, the idea of a League of Nations was a signifier for the shortcomings of the prewar inter-imperial political system that also doubled as an idealized political goal taken directly from the war aims of the government itself, but that dissenting writers firmly believed the government would ultimately prove incapable of achieving. Contrary to Winkler, I argue that the pairing of democratic oversight for British foreign policy making at home with international oversight of inter-, and later, intra-imperial relations abroad under a League of Nations provided an institutional expression for the 'indissoluble connection' between foreign and domestic policy dissenting leaders had been emphasizing for their working-class readers from the outbreak of the war.⁷¹

The fact that outlawing the annexation of territory was at the center of the League idea for dissenting writers from its earliest inception is one often overlooked by historians. The UDC was quite clear in its Cardinal Points, however, that democratic control meant "democratic control of foreign policy"(2); that democratically controlled foreign policy should "not be aimed at... maintaining the 'balance of power'" but rather "the establishment of a Concert of Europe"(3); that a policy of conquest and territorial transfer, the "raison d'être" of the balance of power, should be outlawed by that body (1); and that European empires should be disarmed, presumably to force the adherence to inter-imperial arbitration (4).⁷² The ILP similarly linked "territorial aggression and national abasement" as reciprocal problems meant to addressed by workers "press[ing]

⁷⁰ Henry R. Winkler, *Paths Not Taken: British Labour and International Policy in the 1920's* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina, 1994), p. 11. For the renewed interest among dissenting writers after 1917, see Henry R. Winkler, *The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain: 1914-1919* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1952), pp. 167-198, especially pp. 170 and 176.

⁷¹ Swartz, p. 150.

⁷² *Manchester Guardian*, September 14, 1914.

for frank and honest diplomatic policies, controlled by themselves” at home and demanding “the establishment of the United States of Europe” abroad in its early *Manifesto on the War* (1914).⁷³

As the British government seemed to drift further toward a balance of power settlement for the war in its rhetoric, the scope and significance of the League idea in dissenting propaganda grew in direct proportion. By 1916, H. N. Brailsford could write that, in his view, the only “alternative to Areopagus is Armageddon.”⁷⁴ Explaining precisely why this was occupied a number of dissenting speakers, lecturers, and essayists over the ‘spring peace offensive’ of 1915. In early 1916, one of the most prolific public speakers for the UDC and ILP, the philanthropist and Liberal politician Charles Roden Buxton, published collections of his own 1915 lectures and those of his colleagues reflecting what the British countryside had likely been hearing from UDC and ILP leaders about the war, the peace, and Britain’s future as a leader in the coming international community.

In Buxton’s *Towards a Lasting Settlement*, the social theorist, economist, and UDC member J. A. Hobson suggested that the answer to the problem of modern war lay not in the reformation of inter-imperial but rather *intra*-imperial relations. It went without saying, for Hobson, that “powerful economic needs and interests,” and not the principles of liberty, nationality, and humanity, were the true engines of war. Less obvious, however, was the fact that the source of international tensions sprang from the

⁷³ ILP *Manifesto on the War in Europe*.

⁷⁴ H. N. Brailsford, “The Organization of the Peace,” in Charles Roden Buxton, ed., *Towards a Lasting Settlement* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1915), p. 156. The Areopagus was a council of elders in Athens, Greece before the 5th Century B.C.E. that operated similarly to the Roman Senate. Interestingly, it also functioned as the main court for homicide for Athens and was built above a temple where, allegedly, murders could find temporary sanctuary.

“economic relations of civilized with *uncivilized* or *undeveloped* countries.” For it was in those “backward places,” outside the parameters of any ‘public law’ of Europe, that liberty, in the sense of a freedom of economic and political development, had become a prize of conquest, rather than a benchmark of the progress of civilization, and led to the gradual closing off of the globe into contested imperial quadrants to the detriment of peace and progress.⁷⁵ It followed, for Hobson, that if imperial powers mutually agreed to designate their own colonies, protectorates, and dependencies, in addition to as of yet unclaimed territories, as a single “joint international protectorate” under the supervision of a “permanent International Council” and open to completely free trade for all, “this single agreement would go farther to secure a peaceful future for the world than any other measure.”⁷⁶

Hobson was exceptional in that he had already published his own pamphlet for the UDC dedicated to explicating the form and function of *A League of Nations* (1915).⁷⁷ However, his sentiments were echoed, and with more energy, throughout *Towards a Lasting Settlement*.⁷⁸ A related point on which all were similarly agreed was that the greatest obstacle to an international, rather than an inter-imperial balance of power settlement for the war was pervasiveness of the idea in Britain that national interests were fundamentally and inherently opposed to the progress of foreign nations. Centuries of inter-imperial relations grounded in mutual suspicion and fear, argued historian, social activist, and UDC member G. Lowes Dickinson, had led to a global political system

⁷⁵ J. A. Hobson, “The Open Door,” in Charles Roden Buxton, ed., *Towards a Lasting Settlement* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1915), pp. 89-90, 92 and 94.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-108.

⁷⁷ J.A. Hobson, *A League of Nations* (London: The Union of Democratic Control, 1915). *Morel F13/6/1, LSE*

⁷⁸ See in particular H. N. Brailsford, “The Organization of the Peace” and G. Lowes Dickenson, “Basis of Permanent Peace.”

based on conquest, intrigue, and the ultimate goal of global domination at the level of government and a purely artificial sense of national rivalry at the level of popular opinion.⁷⁹ European history, argued H. N. Brailsford, had been characterized by war because under such a system, European governments had “never [learned] how to provide for large changes without war.”⁸⁰ As a result, the conquest and retention of territory, the main currency of inter-imperial power, Dickinson explained, had also become an important aspect of national pride. “The English insist in this war, and genuinely believe,” Dickenson argued,

that they are fighting *against* German, not *for* English domination. But how do they feel when, as a matter of fact, they acquire territory? They did not go to war for it. No! But they are very glad to have it... They feel a pride in thinking of the number of the population of their nation, the number of ‘black’ men they vicariously govern. They do enjoy, in that gross way, the sense of power... The lowest form of patriotism, and its commonest form, is but a larger egotism.⁸¹

For Dickenson, this ‘mind of imperial patriotism’ was inherently antagonistic to all other nations for the threat to ‘national security’ they potentially posed. A “truer nationalism and a finer patriotism,” he argued, “demands international organization” in defense of the principles of nationality and democracy shared by all peoples. National security, he insisted, impossible to obtain by war, “can only be obtained by international agreement; and international agreement requires the international mind.”⁸²

In addition to being the key to international security, accepting that the principle of nationality should apply universally, even to ‘undeveloped regions,’ was also the key to cultivating the international mind. The contribution to Buxton’s volume of suffragist and writer Violet Paget, writing under the pseudonym Vernon Lee, argued that “the very

⁷⁹ Dickinson, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁰ Brailsford, “The Organization of the Peace,” p. 153.

⁸¹ Dickenson, p. 21.

⁸² Dickinson, p. 35.

essence of the democratic principle is to consider men and women as *wills* and not as *chattels*; and the progress of democracy... implies also that inhabitants do not belong to territory, but territory to inhabitants.” It followed, for Paget, that “to transfer a province is therefore as undemocratic as to sell a slave... the democratic principle absolutely rejects the notion of a military victory having ‘fruits’.”⁸³ As Buxton pointed up, the “nationality principle is merely another form of the democratic principle,” which, as the “essential doctrine of Liberalism,” aspires to the attainment of “‘the independent existence and free development’ of all the peoples.”⁸⁴ Elsewhere, important socialist leaders like the ILP’s Fenner Brockway were making similar statements about the principled responsibilities of socialists to ensure a lasting peace by ensuring that, in the postwar world, “the nations advanced in the arts of civilization would go to the primitive peoples not to exploit but to assist, not to impress upon them their particular forms of civilization but to encourage them to develop according to their own national genius.”⁸⁵ The singular act of denying “the right of conquest” at the peace, Buxton argued, would be a “precedent of priceless value for the future” for removing the stakes of the ‘gamble of war’ from the table. More importantly, however,

the solid fact that none of the combatants in this greatest of all wars had succeeded in establishing its right to any territory by might alone, would remain permanently in the consciousness of mankind, and would profoundly influence their thoughts when the possibility of another appeal to the hazard of war was beginning to be considered.⁸⁶

⁸³ Vernon Lee, “Democracy and International Relations,” *Lasting Settlement*, pp. 207-8

⁸⁴ C. R. Buxton, “Nationality,” in *Lasting Settlement*, pp. 40 and 53. The internal quotes mark a phrase, often quoted by dissenting writers, from Winston Churchill..

⁸⁵ Fenner A. Brockway, *Socialism for Pacifists* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1916), p. 53. *LSE ILP/5/1916*

⁸⁶ Charles Roden Buxton, *Shouted Down! Lectures on the Settlement of the War, intended to be delivered at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate, London on January 3rd, 10th, and 17th, 1916* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1916), p. 6, *Pamphlet no. 328.624, PHM*

Calls for the destruction, dismemberment, and, presumably, the reallocation of territory from the Central Powers were, obviously, fundamentally opposed to such principles. Equally opposed, however, was the reluctance of the government to come out in the open at the national and inter-imperial level, with its actual aims for the war. It was absolutely crucial, in the name of peace but also in defense of democratic principles in Britain, argued the pamphlet *The ILP and the War*, that the British democracy ask their government,

What are we fighting for now? 'Until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed,' says the Prime Minister. But what does that mean, and **how much longer must useless slaughter continue?** Let the Governments state in plain language what they are aiming at, so that the peoples may judge."⁸⁷

The UDC magazine, concurred, opening one of its earliest issues in February 1916 with an article by well-known suffragist F.W. Pethick Lawrence entitled "Why Not State Terms?" in which the author called for the government to

abandon vague phrases about the ends of the war, and... state categorically and publicly what are the definite objects for which the war is being prosecuted, and what are the terms on the satisfaction of which, this war can be brought to an end... in order that we and the other peoples of the allied nations may... be able to express an opinion as to whether they contain all that we want, and nothing more than we are prepared to go on fighting for."⁸⁸

At the ILP's annual conference that April, Chair and Labour MP F. W. Jowett took the developing 'State the Aims' campaign to the level of a political platform for the ILP by tabling an amendment that

the Government should... make a public declaration disavowing all plans of conquest and dismemberment and intimating the willingness of the Allies to

⁸⁷ Independent Labour Party, *The I.L.P. and the War*, I.L.P. Position Leaflet, no. 1 (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1916), *ILP/5/1916/22*, *LSE*.

⁸⁸ *The UDC Magazine*, February 1916.

accept the good offices of neutral nations for the purpose of arriving at a settlement between the belligerents.”⁸⁹

No doubt, by “the good offices of neutral nations,” Jowett meant those of American President Woodrow Wilson who had, just a few weeks before the conference, declared his own government’s preference for a decidedly internationalist settlement for the war.

In late May 1916, Woodrow Wilson publically offered his own principles for a lasting settlement of the Great War at a League to Enforce Peace banquet in Washington D.C. that would breath new life, as well as international legitimacy, into the dissenting peace movement. His views clearly echoed those of dissenting writers in insisting,

I.--That every people has the right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live like other nations.

II.--That the small States of the world have the right to enjoy the same respect for their sovereignty and for their territorial integrity that the great and powerful nations expect and insist upon.

III.--That the world has the right to be free from every disturbance to its peace that has its origin in aggression and the disregard of the rights of peoples and nations.⁹⁰

It was upon these principles, and these principles alone, he inferred, that the United States was willing to become a partner in orchestrating a lasting settlement to the war, if not intervene in the conflict itself.

Although the views put forward by Wilson would come to be inextricably identified with him personally, Sally Harris and Lawrence Martin have shown that dissenting leaders in contact with members of Wilson’s administration had been working

⁸⁹ *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, April, 1916* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1916), p. 8.

⁹⁰ *The Times*, May 29, 1916.

tirelessly to convince the American President to come out publically in favor of their shared agenda for months.⁹¹ Norman Angell, according to Harris, even advised Wilson to employ the UDC tactic of quoting the lofty aims for the war put forward by European leaders in its early hours, such as Asquith's conception of the 'enthronement of the public right,' as a means to embarrass them into accepting his proposed arbitration toward those ends.⁹² Emboldened by Wilson's speech, UDC writers moved forward with the campaign for a negotiated peace with renewed energy, organizing a Peace Negotiations Committee to direct the national propaganda effort and openly challenged the government's reluctance to even state its peace aims, let alone engage in actual negotiations.⁹³

Over the course of 1916, however, the ability of the government to 'come clean' about its aims was dwindling by the week. According to Turner, the Cabinet had already privately concluded the December prior that simply outlasting the enemy was hopeless and that only a massive offensive while Britain still had the forces to make it could save them from being "forced by economic and financial constraints to accept an unfavourable peace or the mediation of a forbiddingly unbiased American President."⁹⁴ Accordingly, the First Military Service Act from January was expanded in May to include married men as well. Contrary to the government's insistence that the war was not being prolonged for imperial gain, the Asquith coalition had formalized its secret agreements with Russia and France to divide the territories of the Central Powers into spheres of influence and occupation after the war mere days before Wilson's speech. Moreover, while British

⁹¹ Harris, p. 137 and Laurence W. Martin, "Woodrow Wilson's Appeals to the People of Europe: British Radical Influence on the President's Strategy," *Political Science Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (December 1959): 498-516.

⁹² Harris, p. 137.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹⁴ Turner, pp. 82-3 and 126.

forces were dying by the thousands in their attempts to complete the occupation of Britain's shares of the spoils in Mesopotamia, Arab forces under the Sherif Hussein's son Amir Faysal were just setting out to take possession the remaining territories already promised to France.

As Secretary of State for War over 1916, Lloyd George intensified the focus of the war effort in the Eastern theaters where 'real victories' could be quickly and definitively achieved and British morale reinvigorated; tightened governmental controls of industrial production and recruitment at home to shore up the amount of force Britain could bring to the field; and consolidated the decision making power of the War Council down to a few like minded statesmen with near autocratic powers to streamline the effectiveness of British strategy making.⁹⁵ With key Conservative and Liberal members of government and Parliament gathering behind him, Lloyd George was in a key position to finally oust Asquith when his commitment to a balance of power settlement for the war began to shift, for Peter Yearwood, toward favoring a stronger postwar Anglo-American alliance.⁹⁶

In September 1916, Lloyd George established his position in relation to both Asquith and Wilson in an interview with an American journalist, declaring that

now that the fortunes of the game have turned a bit, are not disposed to stop because of the squealing done by Germans or done for the Germans by probably well-meaning but misguided sympathizers and humanitarians... Germany elected to make this a fight to a finish with England... Now we intend to see that Germany has her way. The fight must be to a finish—to a knock-out... The whole world—including neutrals of the highest purposes and humanitarians with the best motives—must know that there can be no outside interference at this stage. Britain asked no intervention when she was unprepared to fight. She will

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-151.

⁹⁶ Peter J Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914-1925* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 29.

tolerate none now that she is prepared until the Prussian military despotism is broken beyond repair.⁹⁷

In the weeks to follow, differences of opinion on the wisdom of Lloyd George's statements would draw much clearer lines of political division in the Parliament, leading to a clearer gathering of force behind him and ending in early December with statesmen across party lines threatening their own resignations in lieu of Asquith's.

On December 18, Wilson responded to Lloyd George's sentiments with his first 'Peace Note.' In terms that seemed directly inspired by dissenting propaganda, a "double answer to radical prayers," according to Kenneth Calder,⁹⁸ Wilson lamented that, apart from general terms and declarations, "the concrete aims for which [the war] is being waged have never been definitively stated" by any of the belligerent powers.⁹⁹ Moreover, he pointed out, taken from their own public statements, it would seem that aims of all belligerent powers were virtually identical to one another, being namely

to make the rights and privileges of weak peoples and small States as secure against aggression or denial in the future as the rights and privileges of the great and powerful States now at war... to secure... against the recurrence of wars like this and against aggression of selfish interference of any kind... [and to prevent] the formation of any more rival leagues to preserve an uncertain balance of power amidst multiplying suspicions.¹⁰⁰

Echoing the dissenting demand that the government state its aims for the war, Wilson claimed to feel "altogether justified in suggesting an immediate opportunity for a

⁹⁷ *The Times*, September 29 1916.

⁹⁸ Kenneth J Calder, *Britain and the Origins of the New Europe, 1914-1918* (Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 80.

⁹⁹ "Note of President Wilson to the Belligerent Powers Suggesting a Statement of Peace Terms," December 18, 1916 in *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916 to November 1918*, Pamphlet series of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law no. 31 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1921), pp. 12-14.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

comparison of views as to the terms which must precede those ultimate arrangements for the peace of the world.”¹⁰¹

The reply of the Allies to Wilson, submitted on January 10 1917, claimed that it would be

impossible at the present moment to attain a peace which will assure them reparation, restitution, and such guarantees to which they are entitled by the aggression for which the responsibility rests with the Central Powers and of which the principle itself tended to ruin the security of Europe.¹⁰²

The terms expected by the Allies included restorations and indemnities for every territory encroached upon by the Central Powers as well as the liberation of all peoples currently under their subjugation, but also, significantly, “the restitution of provinces or territories wrested in the past from the Allies by force or against the will of their populations.”¹⁰³ In other words, in the view of dissenting writers, the Allies expected that the principle of nationality would apply to the punishment of the Central Powers, but not to their own claims to the spoils of the war.¹⁰⁴

Using the vagaries of the Allied reply to his advantage, Wilson expressed his satisfaction with its terms, declaring in the American Senate on January 22 that “both of the groups of nations now arrayed against one another have said, in terms that could not be misinterpreted, that it was no part of the purpose they had in mind to crush their antagonists.” He added that the absence of such intentions opened the door to precisely the type of peace he had in mind, which, he took the opportunity to emphasize, “must be

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² “Entente Reply to President Wilson” January 10, 1917 in James Brown Scott, *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916 to November 1918*, Pamphlet Series of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law ;; No. 31 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1921), pp. 35-38.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁴ Harris, pp. 168-169.

a peace without victory” and not merely “a struggle for a new balance of power” in which

no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development--unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful... [and] henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power, catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry, and disturb their own affairs with influences intruded from without.¹⁰⁵

In short, Wilson used the moment to clarify the demand of the United States that the belligerent powers “adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world.”¹⁰⁶

UDC and ILP leaders turned out in force to capitalize on the renewed national interest in the idea of a negotiated peace generated by President Wilson and the vast distance the government had come from its original aims for the war over the course of 1916 at the third reading of the consolidated funds bill in Parliament on February 20 1917. Ponsonby opened the debate with the accusation that Lloyd George had effectively eliminated all control of the House of Commons over his office, inferring that the new Prime Minister believed he had inherited a ‘benevolent autocracy,’ rather than a democratic government.¹⁰⁷ He insisted that the House deny him that right and face the obvious contradiction between the professed aims of their statesmen for the war and the actual facts on the ground before voting to continue to fund the war effort. Reiterating the oft-heard denials of Lloyd George himself that he was “not fighting a war of

¹⁰⁵ “Address of President Wilson to the Senate,” January 22, 1917 in James Brown Scott, *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916 to November 1918*, Pamphlet Series of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law ;; No. 31 (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1921), pp. 49-55.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-55.

¹⁰⁷ *H.C. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 90, 20 February 1917, cc 1179.

conquest,” Arthur Ponsonby followed with his evidence to the contrary. “We know,” he claimed,

that an agreement has been made with Russia by which Constantinople and the Straits are to go to Russia... Syria to France... and Western Asia and the territory round Smyrna to Italy... that the German Colonies are not to be returned to Germany... that the continued endeavour... [and] great sacrifice in Mesopotamia means that that region will fall to the British Crown. Egypt and Cyprus... have fallen to us... when you sum up the whole territory, that something like 1,500,000 square miles will be added to the British Empire.¹⁰⁸

There was in all this, for Ponsonby, “a direct contradiction” with the original aims for the war, implying that the government was deliberately veiling its developing expansionist agendas now in motion. It was no wonder, he inferred, that the rest of the world believed that “we are indeed out for a war of aggression.”¹⁰⁹

Trevelyan emphasized the long-standing disregard of both the Asquith and Lloyd George coalitions for the demands of the British people for a clear statement of its aims for the war until “the same demand was put forward... [by] President Wilson... a person who could not be disregarded” so easily as the British democracy.¹¹⁰ Seeming to speak to Wilson’s more optimistic interpretation of the Allied reply to his ‘Peace Notes,’ Trevelyan inquired whether the reply was, in fact, “the whole policy” of the government. For, “if we are out for a war of conquest,” he argued, “our people ought to be told, and told by the Prime Minister. The world ought to be apprised of a radical change of intention, and our people ought to discuss and sanction it.”¹¹¹

Snowden was even more direct in emphasizing Trevelyan’s point about the suppression of information about the kind of war the British people were being asked to

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, cc. 1180 and 1185.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, cc. 1181.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, cc. 1188 and 1189.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 1192.

fight. Noting the recent prosecution of “an ex-Member of this House” for publishing a pamphlet describing the role of British foreign policy in causing the war, Snowden reiterated the very points made in the publication in his speech and disparaged the statement at his trial that “it did not matter whether these statements were true or not. That was not the point. Whether they were true or not, they ought not to have been made. They might prejudice recruiting.”¹¹² The purpose of the punitive measures instituted by the government, he asserted, were “to hide the truth from the nation, and to prevent those who believed that they knew the truth of the genesis of this War from declaring what they believed to be the truth.”¹¹³

The same policy persisted, argued MacDonald, in the planning of the settlement. It was not only deplorable that the current and late governments had attempted to solve their “complicated set of international entanglements” by saying “‘Let Russia have Constantinople, but do not tell the people of this country that the agreement has been come to’,” he argued, it was short-sighted and delusional policy planning. For, as the long history of inter-imperial rivalry pointed up by Snowden had shown, it was “plain as a pikestaff,” for MacDonald, “that we cannot assume that the present division of European Powers is going to last for ever.”¹¹⁴ Even if a lasting balance of power could be achieved, insisted Ponsonby,

I do not want to see my country come out of this War a mere winner in a struggle for supremacy. I want to see my country the chief agent in the establishment of a new order founded on international justice and framed to promote a durable international peace.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Ibid.*, cc. 1222.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, cc. 1222.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, cc. 1248.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, cc. 1180.

Liberal MP Richard Lambert concurred, but but also pointed out that foregoing a policy of conquest was not enough. Collectively, the Allies alone had already occupied nearly half of the earth's land surface and around a third of its population in the form of protectorates, colonies, and dependencies. "So long as you have these protectorates," he argued, "so long will there necessarily be a thirst... to acquire those kinds of protectorates and territories, and until you have taken away the temptation... I maintain that it is absolutely impossible to hope for permanent peace."¹¹⁶ Lambert, for one, was "as anxious as anybody can be to see something in the nature of a League of Nations set up in the world" to facilitate that transition from inter-imperial war to international peace. The scope of his vision for the League also clearly reflected the growing tendency among dissenting writers to look beyond the addition of new territories toward the liberation of long standing possessions of the British Empire.¹¹⁷

Supporters of Lloyd George, who had left the House just before the debate, denied outright any sort of imperialistic agenda for the war. Nevertheless, they undertook to preemptively justify any annexations that might take place at war's end. The dissenting members, they argued, were "confusing the objects with which we went to war with the results which will follow from our victory." Like the expenditure in blood and treasure, the British had not gone to war *for* territorial gains, but, as Conservative Member Ronald McNeil pointed out, "a transference of territory from the enemy... is clearly necessary... if we are to carry out the very objects which from the first have been announced as our purpose, and to which the hon. Member himself called attention."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, cc. 1262.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, cc. 1262.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, cc. 1185.

Loyal supporter of Lloyd George Colonel Hamar Greenwood¹¹⁹ went even further in accusing dissenting speakers of desiring the breakup of the British Empire itself. Coming to the defense of the Empire, Greenwood offered his own justifications for extending its sovereignty.

I know that wherever the British territory has been extended it has been better for the people over which the British flag has flown, and there is no part painted red that has not benefited by the coming of the British... It is the great glory of our race that wherever we have extended the Empire we have carried there benefits unheard of by the peoples over which we govern, and we have carried to them a sense of justice that no other race possesses, a sense of honesty and incorruptibility of administration which every other country in the world envies and endeavours to emulate.¹²⁰

For Chancellor of the Exchequer Bonar Law taking of Germany's colonies away from her was purely a matter of punishment for taking Europe into war. "It is necessary," he insisted, "to make nations that commit those crimes find that they do not pay. That is what we are fighting for."¹²¹ Irrespective of such justifications, over the remainder of 1917 the government's resistance to state its aims for the war would deteriorate along with the domestic, inter-imperial, and international tolerance of its presumed aspirations for a renewed Anglo-Centric balance of power.

In May 1917, the equipoise of power envisioned by Lloyd George for the postwar world was significantly undermined by the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in Russia and a startling declaration of revised aims for the war and the peace by the revolutionary government. In addition to advocating an early negotiated and even separate peace with

¹¹⁹ According to M. F. Seedorf, Greenwood was so famous for his ability to redirect Parliamentary debate away from criticism of his Party leader through evasions and denials that to engage in such practices became known as 'telling a Greenwood.' See M. F. Seedorf, 'The Lloyd George government and the Anglo-Irish War, 1919-1921', PhD diss., University of Washington, Seattle, 1974, p. 114.

¹²⁰ *H.C. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 90, 20 February 1917, cc.1196-7.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, cc. 1232.

the Central Powers, the new government also demanded a “general peace which shall not tend toward either dominion over other nations, the seizure of their national possessions, or violent usurpation of their territories—a peace without annexation or indemnity and based on the right of nations to decide their own affairs.”¹²²

Immediately upon receiving word of the Russian declaration, Snowden tabled a motion in Parliament that the British government welcome the “declaration of the new democratic Government of Russia, repudiating all proposals for imperialistic conquest and aggrandizement” by issuing “a similar declaration on behalf of the British democracy and join with the allies in restating the Allied terms in conformity with the Russian declaration.” Together with the recent entry of the United States into the war, he argued, the “real inspiration and motive of the Russian Revolution was the objection of the democracy to a continuation of the war for Imperialistic ambitions.” The aims conveyed in the Allied reply to Wilson’s ‘Peace Notes,’ a work of “Imperialism and conquest, naked and unashamed” for Snowden, were now in contradiction not only with the original aims for the war and the will of the British people, but with half of Britain’s Allies. Asquithian loyalist Hastings Lees Smith agreed with Snowden, stating that, with the expansionist ambitions of Russia now rescinded, “the next move towards peace lay with this country.”¹²³

Parliamentary objections to making such a declaration of Allied unity on territorial issues included the instability of the new Russian regime, the vagueness or uncertainty of their policies at such an early stage, and, for Conservative peer Robert Cecil, the obvious existing conformity of British aims for the war with those of both the

¹²² “Statement of the Reorganized Russian Provisional Government on its Policy with Respect to War Aims, the Alliance, and A Separate Peace, May 19, 1917,” in Scott, p. 102-3.

¹²³ *The Times*, May 17, 1917.

new Russian government and President Wilson. "We entered upon this war with no scheme of Imperialistic conquest or aggrandizement," Cecil stated, and "at the present stage of the war it is equally true that no one desires anything of that kind."¹²⁴ Asquith concurred with Cecil, but added that it was Snowden and men of his ilk that were confusing the issue with vagaries and not the British government. Further justifying the possibility of annexations after the war, he argued that the goals of emancipation of subjugated peoples and imperial annexation were not only not antithetical, but unavoidably linked. The achievement of "a durable and honourable peace, which consists in the emancipation of enthralled and oppressed populations from the despotism and its attendant sufferings under which they have hitherto laboured," Asquith argued, "would either not be accomplished at all or accomplished most inadequately unless annexation in that sense of emancipation were thoroughly carried out by the Allies." Similarly, he reasoned, control of certain territories "for the purpose of retaining strategic positions" did not amount to imperialistic aggression, but merely "self-protection and defense against future attack." "Not only is [annexation] legitimate," Asquith suggested, but it "commend[s] itself to our conscience and to our intelligence... [as well as] the purposes for which we drew the sword in this war." With "the ground thus explored and these ambiguities removed," he suggested, there was "no substantial difference" between his early or later aims for the war and the proclamations of President Wilson, the Allied reply, or the recent statements of the new Russian government. Despite such conformity of Allied principles for the war, however, the House voted 238 to 32 against Snowden's resolution that they be openly declared.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

The triumph of the Russian democracy had a radicalizing effect on the dissenting left and the Labour movement as a whole. That June, more socialistically minded dissenting leaders like MacDonald and Snowden were leading voices at the Labour and Socialist Convention held at Leeds for the express purpose of not only giving support to the new regime in Russia, but following her example. According to Stephen Graubard, the positions taken by these leaders at the Conference, “seemed suddenly to have abandoned years of ‘parliamentary’ preaching... to agree to a resolution creating extraparliamentary Soviets with sovereign powers” within the British Isles.¹²⁶ When Lloyd George obstructed the attendance of British Labour representatives at an international conference of socialists organized in support of a negotiated peace along the lines set by the Russian government that August, Parliamentary Labour Party Chair Arthur Henderson resigned from the Cabinet in protest. This act of defiance, according to Keith Robbins, not only rectified Henderson’s defiled status in the Labour Movement, it elevated him to become one of its most influential figures for the duration of the war.¹²⁷

With support for the new regime in Russia and dissenting identification with it at its height, the Bolshevik *coup d’état* that November brought even more extreme aims for the peace and even more damning evidence against the government’s conformity with those aims. Within twenty-four hours of taking power, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin announced on the floor of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets his intention of initiating “an

¹²⁶ Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, Harvard historical monographs 30 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 38-39.

¹²⁷ Robbins, p. 139. On this topic generally, see J.M. Winter, “Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party,” *The Historical Journal* 15, no. 4 (December 1972): 753-773 and Jonathan Davis, “Left Out in the Cold: British Labour Witnesses the Russian Revolution,” *Revolutionary Russia* Vol. 18, No. 1. (2005): pp. 71-87.

immediate peace without annexations and without indemnities.”¹²⁸ In contrast to

Asquith’s definition of annexation, Lenin clarified that

By annexation... the government... understands any incorporation of a small or weak nationality by a large and powerful state without a clear, definite, and voluntary expression of agreement and desire by the weak nationality, regardless of the time when such a forcible incorporation took place, regardless also of how developed or how backward is the nation forcibly attached or forcibly detained within the frontiers of the state, and, finally regardless of whether or not this nation is located in Europe or in distant lands beyond the seas.¹²⁹

To continue the war as it had been waged, he argued, “simply to decide how to divide the weak nationalities among the powerful and rich nations which had seized them would be the greatest crime against humanity.”¹³⁰ As Erez Manela has argued, although Lenin might have been easier to dismiss as merely a radical revolutionary earlier in the war, Wilson’s proclamations imbued his position with new legitimacy.

On the very day Asquith attempted to justify the potential annexation of enemy territories as an act of ‘imperial benevolence,’ a report was published by a special commission organized under his own coalition government that would largely decry the legitimacy of any such notions. Originally sanctioned by the War Council in late 1915 to investigate alleged inadequacies in supply transport and medical facilities for British forces in Mesopotamia, the series of commissions that would contribute to the Mesopotamia Commission Report of 1917 provided a scathing analysis of the origins and mismanagement of what Kristian Ulrichsen has referred to as “the final fling of

¹²⁸ James Bunyan and Harold H. Harold Henry Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1918 ; Documents and Materials*, by James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher (Stanford, Calif., Stanford University Press, [1961, c1934], p. 125.

¹²⁹ Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution*., p. 125.

¹³⁰ Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution*., p. 126.

nineteenth-century colonial campaigning” for the British Empire.¹³¹ Upon its publication, even the staunchly conservative and pro-war *Daily Telegraph* would refer to the report as “the most melancholy, the most damnatory, and the most humiliating document produced in connection with the war.”¹³² For dissenting writers, the report provided the clearest evidence to date of the persistent indifference of British statesmen to the impact their aspirations for imperial aggrandizement from the beginning of the war had had on the interests of British subjects and citizens throughout the Empire.

As Paul Davis has shown, public and Parliamentary outcry over complaints, trickling past government censors into Britain, of the daily suffering British troops had been forced to endure under the “rigid economy” imposed on the Mesopotamia Campaign led Viceroy for India Harding to sanction an independent inquiry in late 1915 ‘before it was forced upon the government’.¹³³ With early investigations underway by late December and even more damning reports of mismanagement and suffering coming in over the spring of 1916, Asquith’s enemies in government took advantage of the opportunity to highlight his failures as a Liberal wartime Prime Minister.¹³⁴ Edward Carson, a leading Conservative critic of Asquith who personally “set himself up as a scourge of what he considered mismanagement and inefficiency at the highest level,” according to David Powell, took the investigations to the next level in July with the formation of a Special Parliamentary Commission to look more deeply into the matter.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, “The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914-1922,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 2007): 349-377.

¹³² *Daily Telegraph*, June 27, 1917.

¹³³ Davis, pp. 175-177.

¹³⁴ Roger Adleson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 119.

¹³⁵ David Powell, *British Politics, 1910-35: The Crisis of the Party System* (Routledge, 2004), p. 70.

Under the coalition government, however, the campaign in Mesopotamia was refitted and resupplied for the purpose of taking and holding Baghdad and all points south, “the first time in the war (but not the last),” for Davis, “that military operations were authorized for the express purpose of extending the British empire.”¹³⁶ By the time the Mesopotamia Commission Report was published a year later, the *Times* could truthfully report that “the first thing to remember about [the Mesopotamia Commission Report] is that it bears little relation to present conditions.”¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the findings of the Report claimed that the disastrous decision to advance toward Baghdad in 1915 was “based on political and military miscalculations, and attempted with tired and insufficient forces, and inadequate preparation.” Although the commanders on the spot bore some weight of responsibility, the Report determined that the ultimate “responsibility must be attributed to the political powers in London since they made decisions on the principle that they should decide military policy.”¹³⁸ The ILP’s *Labour Leader* took the assessment even further in insisting in that “we must not lose sight of the important fact that it is not only individuals, but a system which is at fault.”¹³⁹

As the *Labour Leader* pointed out, “no document published in this generation has created such a profound sensation as the Mesopotamia Report.”¹⁴⁰ The *Times* agreed, calling the Report “one of the most distressing documents ever submitted to Parliament.”¹⁴¹ Presumably, one of the reasons the findings of the Commission were so shocking was the absence of any real news coming in from Mesopotamia from the

¹³⁶ Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 172 and 232.

¹³⁷ *The Times*, June 26, 1917.

¹³⁸ Davis, p. 208.

¹³⁹ *Labour Leader*, June 5 1917.

¹⁴⁰ *Labour Leader*, June 5 1917.

¹⁴¹ *The Times*, June 27 1917.

beginning of the campaign. The *Manchester Guardian* had been questioning the silence of the government on the progress of the campaign for months, noting in its characteristically suggestive tone that, although the campaign was being “conducted entirely from the resources of India” and in territory that would become “valuable principally as an outlet for the surplus population of India,” the British people were “just as eager to know about the fortunes of our Indian army in Mesopotamia as they were to hear the details of General Botha's conquest of South-west Africa.”¹⁴² The *Herald* was more direct with its criticisms in the months leading up to the release of the Report, publishing Irish Parliamentarian John Dillon's critique of ‘the Censorship’ on issues pertaining to the Eastern campaigns in particular. Newspapers that tended to report “what was acceptable to the Government,” such as “the Times, the Daily Mail, and the Morning Post,” Dillon declared, “got full scope, no matter how false the information, even known to the Government to be false, while other newspapers, which desired to tell unpleasant truths, were sat upon by the Censor and compelled to keep silence.”¹⁴³

Indeed, the *Times* foreign correspondent in Mesopotamia, Edmund Candler, had been publishing suspiciously celebratory depictions of the “peaceful progress” of British forces breathing new life back into the long decrepit backwater the “Garden of Eden” had become under the Ottomans.¹⁴⁴ The “ceaseless demand for more and more despotic control of British lives by irresponsible Government, with the suppression of discussion as to the use made of those lives by that Government,” Dillon concluded, was

¹⁴² *Manchester Guardian*, September 30, 1915.

¹⁴³ *The Herald*, March 10, 1917.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, *The Times* May 19 and June 20, 1917. Also Priya Satia's discussion of the ‘imperial redemption’ of Mesopotamia Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Ch. 5.

“Prussianism with a vengeance.”¹⁴⁵ With the truth about the “criminal blundering which condemned thousands of men to the indescribable horrors they endured” finally revealed, the *Labour Leader* reported, “public feeling” was so vehement in its demands for the

summary punishment of the chief criminals... [that] the Government cannot avoid taking drastic action... The country has trusted these men with millions of lives and the story of the Mesopotamia campaign shows how recklessly they use them, and how incompetent they are to undertake any serious task.¹⁴⁶

Dissenting writers were quick to take full advantage of such an opportunity.

In the ILP pamphlet *The Mesopotamia Scandal* (1917), T. D. Hutchinson stressed the attribution of responsibility to the government itself, echoed in the *Labour Leader* and the *Herald*, by illustrating the underlying motives for taking Mesopotamia in the first place. Referring to the campaign as the Mesopotamian “Oil-Pipe Operations,” Hutchinson pointed out that “Lloyd George was one of the most prominent members of the Cabinet during the Mesopotamia mess,” that the initial purview of the campaign had been to “protect the oil-installation at Abadan... [which] belonged to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in which the British Government had recently become large shareholders,” and that the decisions to either send or restrict the supply of reinforcements or to advance further in country were largely determined by the Secretary of State’s perception of the threat to those installations.¹⁴⁷ Not only were such motives concealed, Hutchinson noted, but also the price being paid by the British people for their accomplishment. Had not Asquith himself claimed in the fall of 1915 that “during the whole course of the war... a series of operations more carefully contrived, more brilliantly conducted, or with better

¹⁴⁵ *The Herald*, March 10, 1917.

¹⁴⁶ *Labour Leader*, June 5 1917.

¹⁴⁷ T.D. Hutchinson, *The Mesopotamia Scandal: A Story of Military Incompetence* (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1917), pp. 2-3. *ILP/5/1917/17*, LSE.

prospects of final success,” than those then driving “the Turks... back up the Euphrates and the Tigris”?¹⁴⁸

For the editors of both the *Labour Leader* and the *Herald*, however, the implications of the scandal were of even broader scope. Snowden drew particular attention in the *Leader* to the punishing conditions inflicted upon Indian troops fighting under British colors as identical to “the spirit and the methods [British administrators] are accustomed to employ in the government of India.” The crucial issue, however, was not merely that the British administration in India had been proven to be “an incompetent, intolerant, and callous bureaucracy... not fitted to be trusted with any responsibility,” but, rather, why it had been permitted to become so. For, in Snowden’s view,

What happened in Mesopotamia will happen anywhere and everywhere if politicians and officials are not subject to democratic control. The evils of our own Government spring from the same causes. Where there is public control in a government department there is efficiency and right dealing. Where there is bureaucracy and secrecy there is inefficiency and intrigue.¹⁴⁹

The story of British working class citizens and Indian subjects valiantly fighting and dying for the British flag while being denied by their government even the most basic needs of any force in the field or a knowledge of the base imperialistic aims for which they suffered, was but a snapshot of the larger story of the failings of Britain’s purported imperial democracy.

Writing for the *Herald*, George Lansbury gave voice to the ILP’s increasing identification of working class struggles with those of British imperial subjects everywhere in lauding Commission member Josiah Wedgewood’s Parliamentary motion, tabled shortly after the submission of the Report. The “war of democracy against

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁹ *Labour Leader*, June 5 1917.

autocracy,” Wedgewood argued, had justifiably inspired in all peoples the will to protect the principle of nationality against that of tyranny. The valiance of the Indian volunteers in defense of this principle, he insisted, now demanded that “our mission to extend self-government to subject races without regard to our advantage” be given “proof of our faith by extending to the peoples of India a generous measure of self-government and the assured prospect of complete freedom within the union of the British Empire.” The Indian people, he reasoned, “have as good a right to determine their own future as have the people of Servia [sic] or Montenegro... They are as advanced and as civilized as the people of China or Japan, and as those on whose behalf we are said to be fighting in the Balkans.” To deny them that right, he concluded, would be “the story of Ireland all over again, only on a larger scale.”¹⁵⁰

The dissenting critique of the government’s ‘brutal indifference’ to such issues and opinions was further confirmed when the findings of the Report were debated in Parliament that July. “The most remarkable thing” about the Parliamentary debate over the Report, the *Manchester Guardian* would comment “was that the Prime Minister showed a great deal of irritation at being bothered with the question at all.”¹⁵¹ Not only did members of the government express their contempt of the idea that their management of the campaign had been in any way ‘criminal,’ but even suggested, as Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour put it, that “the criminals... are not Lord Hardinge nor the Secretary of State for India. They are the Commission” for their condemnation of government officials “over matters of relative triviality.”¹⁵² As Davis has shown, dissenting leaders

¹⁵⁰ *The Herald* June 17, 1917. See also July 30, 1917.

¹⁵¹ *Manchester Guardian*, July 14, 1917.

¹⁵² *H.C. Deb.* 5th Series, vol. 98, July 12 1917, cc. 2261

came to the defense of the Commission in force in both Parliament and print.¹⁵³ As Snowden would lament in the *Labour Leader*, however, the results “could not have been more unsatisfactory.” Lloyd George’s speech was singled out by Snowden as “an amazing declaration.”

he asks in effect that those responsible... should not only go unpunished, but should be left in positions where they may be able to bring similar misfortune upon thousands of others. He denounced the press and the public for taking so much notice of the disclosures of this committee. He declared... that the House of Commons was wasting its time... by bothering about such a relatively unimportant matter... He begged the House of Commons to rise above these paltry things, and to say to the Government, ‘Get on with the war’.¹⁵⁴

In the *Manchester Guardian*, Trade Unionist and Labour MP J. H. Thompson reported that the fact that “the Government did not deal promptly and effectively with those responsible regardless of rank and position... [had] profoundly affected our people, whose husbands, sons, and brothers had been the victims of such blunders.”¹⁵⁵ The suggestion that such views were widespread appeared to be born out, for the *Times*, by such examples as the motion of the Miner’s Federation at Glasgow, which

viewed with regret and indignation the action of the Government in this country in not bringing to trial and punishment the persons culpably responsible for the awful loss of life and misery endured by our troops in Mesopotamia as made known in the official report, and declares that such treatment of persons in high places as compared with the rigorous discipline meted out to private soldiers is not conducive to inspiring that confidence in the Government of the country so essential to a successful prosecution of the war. This, he said, was one of the most distressful things of the war, and it was followed in his opinion by a more disgraceful thing when the House of Commons allowed the matter to drop.¹⁵⁶

“The motion,” the *Times* reported, “was unanimously adopted.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Davis, 2210-219.

¹⁵⁴ *Labour Leader* June 19, 1917.

¹⁵⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, July 14, 1917..., July 23, 1917.

¹⁵⁶ *The Times*, July 28, 1917.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Just as Lloyd George suggested they do, dissenting writers and leaders ‘got on with the war’ as they understood it at home. Already, as reported at the ILP’s annual conference that April, their Peace Negotiations Committee had already held over six hundred meetings nationally, established over eighty local community groups, obtained around a quarter of a million signatures, and distributed over three million leaflets.¹⁵⁸ With national interest in the issues raised by Wilson’s ‘Peace Notes,’ Russia’s abdication of annexations and indemnities, and the revelation of the Mesopotamia ‘Oil-Pipe scandal,’ dissenting writers focused their attentions on the related issues of forcing the government to ‘State the Aims’ for which they now fought and to ensure that those aims were bereft of any sort of expansionist agenda.

The *U.D.C. Magazine*, which was launched with the ‘State the Aims’ campaign in the wake of the first consolidated funds debate in Parliament in February 1916, was unabashed in its accusations that the government had made the reallocation of enemy territories a primary war aim, disguised as the liberation of small powers, and had no intention of ending the war without the power to distribute those territories as it saw fit.¹⁵⁹ British action in Mesopotamia in particular, “for which such special and heavy sacrifices have been made and which strategically and economically is a prize we are, it appears, not likely to relinquish,” for Arthur Ponsonby, had demonstrated that the war was “now a war of aggression” for the British Empire.¹⁶⁰ “Is it any real surprise that the Central Powers wish to go on fighting,” asked Cocks and Ponsonby, now that they were “fighting

¹⁵⁸ *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Leeds April, 1917* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1917), pp. 7-8.

¹⁵⁹ F. Seymour Cocks, “The Proposed Break-Up of Austria and Turkey,” *U.D.C. Magazine*, March 1917.

¹⁶⁰ Arthur Ponsonby, “Is it now a War of Aggression?” *U.D.C. Magazine*, March 1917.

for their very existence against a plan of deliberate dismemberment?"¹⁶¹ Ramsay MacDonald was particularly vehement in his refutations of the government's justifications for annexation as a form of 'imperial benevolence.' "Of course liberation is not annexation," MacDonald pointed out, "but its opposite" and the bewildering language of liberation used by the government was nothing more than a smoke screen for a policy that was, in his view, not only "frankly annexationist," but anti-democratic in its presentation to the British people as anything otherwise.¹⁶² The fact that Britons had not only been led into a war of conquest under the false pretenses of a war of liberation, argued Trevelyan, but kept in that war through the same duplicitous propaganda vindicated the UDC's early emphasis on demanding the interdiction of annexation as its first Cardinal Point.¹⁶³ Similar sentiments were expressed in the *Labour Leader*, the *Herald*, and in a variety of UDC and ILP pamphlets.¹⁶⁴ Even those who still believed with conviction that "our war aims are not disfigured by any taint of predatory Imperialism," such as the *Guardian*'s Henry Bentinck, nevertheless argued

surely we have a right to be told what we are fighting for... with regard to Turkey and the near East. We have three armies in those regions. What are they fighting for? The liberation of subject peoples or the transfer of territory from one Power to another without the consent of the inhabitants? If the former be our object, then the project for the transference of large portions of Asia Minor as spoils of war to one of our Allies is entirely unjustifiable.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Ramsay MacDonald, "The 'No-Annexations' Debate," *U.D.C. Magazine*, June 1917.

¹⁶³ Charles Trevelyan, "Conquest or Self-Determination of Peoples," *U.D.C. Magazine*, November 1917.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, the *Herald*, June 16, 17 and 39, and August 23; The *Labour Leader*, June 19 and December 20; Ramsey J. MacDonald, *Labour and International Relations* (Derby: The Derby and District I.L.P.Federation, 1917) *ILP/5/1917/31*, LSE and, *Patriots and Politics* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1917) *ILP/5/1917/32*, LSE, J.T. Walton Newbold, *Capitalism and the War* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1917) *ILP/5/1917/39*, LSE, R. C. Wallhead, *Money v. Men* (The National Labour Press, LTD., 1917), *ILP/5/1917/56*, LSE and Union of Democratic Control Union of Democratic Control, *Suggestions for Terms of a Peace Settlement* (London: National Labour Press, 1917) *Morell/f13/5/2*, LSE.

¹⁶⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, August 8, 1917.

The government's reaction to the dissenting campaign was also indicative of its progress over the course of 1917. As Swartz has shown, surveillance of dissenting activists expanded sharply after the Russian Revolution in the spring of 1917 and developed into a full-blown 'witch-hunt' by the end of the year.¹⁶⁶ For Harris, Lloyd George made crushing British dissent, particularly of the Labour variety, his personal vendetta, bringing the full weight of both the National War Aims Committee and the Defense of the Realm Act against them.¹⁶⁷ Lloyd George's hostility to dissenting opinion was, for Brock Millman, a reflection of the force in public opinion against the government being generated by it.¹⁶⁸ As Millman pointed up, the Lloyd George coalition was in clear preparation stages for a full-scale domestic revolt by early 1918, suggesting that the efforts of dissenting writers were, for the government at least, actually threatening to ignite a Russian style socialist revolution at home.¹⁶⁹ UDC and ILP writers complained bitterly of the disregard for democracy and free-speech exhibited by the campaign of repression directed at them by the government. They also offered it up, however, as proof that the government's aims were precisely as they were described by the dissenting activists they had arrested on trumped up charges and the publications they had seized in illegal raids.

In the fall of 1917, following the Bolshevik *coup d'état* in Russia, Commissar of Foreign Affairs for the new Russian government, Leon Trotsky seemed to answer the prayers of beleaguered dissenting writers in Britain by announcing the eminent

¹⁶⁶ Swartz, pp. 160-61, 175-6, and 178-194.

¹⁶⁷ Harris, pp. 181 and 182.

¹⁶⁸ Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), See Ch. 7, especially pp. 175-182.

¹⁶⁹ Millman, See Ch. 10 and Conclusion, especially pp. 271-272, 285, 289, and 304-306.

publication of the secret Allied agreements to divide the territories of the Central Powers among them at war's end.¹⁷⁰ On November 26, three days after they were published in the Russian papers *Izvestia* and *Pravda*, the *Manchester Guardian* published its translations of the formal agreements of the Allies indicating the precise details of the territorial settlements meant to define the parameters of the new balance of power in the postwar world.¹⁷¹ On December 6, the *Labour Leader* dedicated an entire issue to the discussion of the treaties, providing maps and commentary detailing precisely how the territories comprising the present day Middle East were to be divided and reallocated in the new postwar balance of power envisioned by their own government. In an accompanying article, Snowden declared that

The publication of these secret treaties also places beyond all dispute the Imperialistic character of the war which is being waged by the Allied Powers. It is the existence of these treaties which has tied the hands of the British government, and prevented them from making an honest and open declaration of their war aims... [they] show how the people of all the belligerent countries have been deceived by their respective Governments into supporting a war ostensibly entered upon and prosecuted either for defense, for the future security of civilization, or even for freedom, but secretly carried out to satisfy lust of power and the greed of Imperialists and financiers.¹⁷²

In the *Herald* a few days later, Brailsford wryly commented that, concerning Britain's share of Mesopotamia, "we alone, with our usual sense for realities, have occupied what we claim."¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 244. The 'Secret Treaties' included the following agreements: the Anglo-Russian agreement of March 1915 regarding British and Russian spheres in Turkey and Persia; the Allied Treaty of London of April 1915 allocating a number of Austrian territories and an 'equal share' of the Ottoman territories to Italy; the agreement between France, Britain, and Russia of March 1916 designating the partition of Asiatic Turkey; the August 1916 Allied agreement to grant Romania parts of the Austrian territories; and the March 1917 Russo-French agreement partitioning parts of Germany.

¹⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 26, 1917.

¹⁷² *Labour Leader*, December 06, 1917.

¹⁷³ *Herald*, December 8, 1917.

On December 19 1917, Ponsonby took up the matter in Parliament, offering a detailed account of both the agreements and the denials of key statesmen, made around the very dates they were formalized, that such agreements either existed or were even contemplated. Ponsonby concluded by declaring to Foreign Secretary Balfour,

you have prostituted the original disinterested motives for which this country entered the war, and you have substituted for them a mean craving for vengeance and punishment, a sordid desire for gain, an arrogant demand for imperial aggrandizement and domination, and this without the consent of the people and behind the backs of the people, secretly, surreptitiously, making declarations all the while deceitful and false.¹⁷⁴

In reply, Balfour dismissed the fervor being raised over agreements that were never intended to be binding or, in any event, had been made irrelevant by the new regime in Russia. "A grosser travesty of the facts does not exist," Balfour declared, than the suggestion that "our aims are selfish or as the camp phrase is 'imperialistic,' and that Great Britain for purely selfish objects is prolonging the war." Referring to Ponsonby's speech as equal to a "propaganda account for the enemy," Balfour shifted the blame to Russia, arguing that

the then Russian Government made a claim to Constantinople, we were carrying on together a great struggle for a great aim and we acquiesced... What is there in that which is in the slightest degree inconsistent with any profession of faith made either by ourselves or on our behalf by President Wilson?¹⁷⁵

Charles Buxton spoke for dissenting opinion of Balfour's evasion of the issues in his response to the Parliamentary debate the next day in the *Labour Leader*. "The upshot of the whole business," Buxton explained

is that our Government has made, behind the backs of the people, proposals and agreements involving direct or indirect annexations without reference to the wishes of the populations concerned, while in its public utterances it has given an account of its war aims which was not only incomplete, but grossly deceptive.

¹⁷⁴ *Times*, December 20, 1917.

¹⁷⁵ *Times*, December 20, 1917.

Whilst it was talking about a war for self-defense, for the sanctity of treaties, for democracy, for a secure and lasting peace, it was secretly putting its hand to agreements which would give lie to these high-sounding phrases. In the Note of January 10, 1917, on the Allies' war aims, the word 'liberation' is applied to the races of Austria-Hungary, and the word 'enfranchisement' to the races of Turkey. In the actual arrangements made or proposed, no such words appear, and the districts specified for partition do not correspond with the boundaries of nationalities.¹⁷⁶

Just a few days after the publication of the Secret Treaties in the *Manchester Guardian*, a most unlikely supporter of the dissenting left made himself known in the equally unlikely pages of the *Daily Telegraph*. In addition to having served as Viceroy for India, Governor-General of Canada, Secretary of State for War, and Foreign Secretary, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, the fifth Marquess of Lansdowne, had been the very architect of the Anglo-French *Entente Cordial* that so many dissenting writers had identified as the first diplomatic steps down the road to the Great War. On November 29 1917, he took what he hoped would be the first steps toward ending that war by publically expressing his advocacy for a negotiated peace at the earliest possible moment.

UDC and ILP writers were, understandably, jubilant.¹⁷⁷ In addition to being a much respected elder statesmen, Lansdowne's long-standing opposition to many of the domestic principles for which dissenting leaders stood only amplified the significance of his alignment with them on the issue of the peace. Lloyd George was, equally understandably, furious.¹⁷⁸ Like the intervention of Woodrow Wilson, Lansdowne's letter imbued the dissenting campaign with the legitimacy he commanded as 'too important a personage to be ignored'.¹⁷⁹ As Swartz has shown, the Letter enabled the

¹⁷⁶ *Labour Leader*, December 20, 1917.

¹⁷⁷ See Robbins, pp. 149-153; Swartz, pp. 192-194; Harris, pp. 161-162; and Turner, p. 249.

¹⁷⁸ Robbins, p. 150.

¹⁷⁹ Harris, pp. 161.

UDC to bring significantly more pressure to bear on the government to make a statement of its war aims over the last two months of 1917. This pressure was further amplified, for Harris, by the beginning of negotiations for a separate peace on the principles of self-determination, open foreign policy, and ‘no annexations and no indemnities,’ between Germany and Russia at Brest-Litovsk on December 9.¹⁸⁰

By the end of December, the British Labour Movement offered its own alternative to the silence of the government on the matter of its war aims with a formal declaration of its own set of aims for the peace. Drafted by Sidney Webb of the Fabian Society, revised by a committee of members from the UDC, the ILP, and the PLP, the *Memorandum on War Aims* was a document comprised of the influences of key intellectual figures across the spectrum of the Labour Movement in 1917 and represented as the will of British labour generally. As Swartz has shown, however, it also signified a clear moment at which “the Union of Democratic Control could rightly assert that British Labour was following its lead in foreign policy.”¹⁸¹ The chief aims of the memorandum were stated as “the complete democratization of all countries; the frank abandonment of every form of ‘Imperialism’; the suppression of secret diplomacy and... the placing of foreign policy... under the control of popularly elected Legislatures;... the universal abolition of compulsory military service in all countries;... [and] the limitation of... armaments.”¹⁸² The Memorandum offered a detailed examination of the most disputed territories and, coming to those dealt with in the Secret Treaties, commented that, in order to avoid their becoming “mere instruments either of exploitation or militarism,” but

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁸¹ The ‘Memorandum on War Aims’ in Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (B. W. Huebsch, 1918), pp. 83-90.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 83-90.

recognizing that “it is impracticable to leave it to the peoples to settle their own destinies” it was insisted that “conformably with the policy of ‘no annexations’ they should be placed for administration in the hands of... a League of Nations.”¹⁸³ The *Herald* went even further in suggesting that such principles applied equally to all peoples, including those considered to be British imperial subjects. “The question of Turkey in Europe and Asia,” argued the Herald,

together with the right of nations to govern themselves according to their own wishes and desires, must apply to the Turks and Egyptians, Persians and Indians, and nearer home to Ireland, as well as to other nations. There can be no colour or religious bar to liberty. The crimes of the Ottoman Government in Armenia are no worse than the crimes of the late Russian Government in Georgia... nor greater than the crimes committed by all the Great Powers in their dealings with what they are pleased to describe as ‘subject races’. We hope organized Labour will see that the demand for freedom is one which is worldwide, and must be applied to all the peoples of the world.¹⁸⁴

As 1917 drew to a close, Lloyd George and the War Cabinet pondered the problem of war aims and concluded by early January that a statement was indeed unavoidable and that it would need to be on lines, for Keith Robbins, of an ‘ultra-democratic’ character. On January 5 1918, Lloyd George opened an address to the Trades Union Conference with the recognition that “when the Government invites organized labour... to maintain the might of their armies in the field, its representatives are entitled to ask... about the purpose to which this precious strength is to be applied.”¹⁸⁵ Addressing the many points raised by dissenting leaders in the press and Parliament, Lloyd George revised the position taken in the Allied reply to Wilson’s ‘Peace Notes’ in a conciliatory tone markedly softer than his characteristic commitment to the ‘knock-out blow,’ in which the destruction and dismantlement of the Central Powers played no role.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁸⁴ *The Herald*, December 22, 1917.

¹⁸⁵ “Statement of British War Aims by Prime Minister Lloyd George, January 5, 1918,” in Scott, p. 231.

Specifically addressing the contentious issue of annexations raised by the revelation of the Secret Treaties, Lloyd George committed the government to what amounted to an abrogation of those agreements in stating that Constantinople would remain in Turkish hands, the Dardanelle Straits would be internationalized, and that the Turkish possessions in the Middle East, “Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine [were] in our judgment entitled to a recognition of their separate national condition.”¹⁸⁶

Lloyd George’s January 5th speech was, of course, the product of a wide variety of influences, not least of which the Prime Minister’s own mercurial political nature. Against the arguments that Lloyd George acquiesced to the pressures brought to bare by Wilson, Lenin, and the dissenting left to definitively commit the British government to a policy bereft of imperial ambition in the name of inter-imperial peace, David Woodward has argued that the “right of center British government” led by Lloyd George was never as closed off to the idea of a negotiated peace on such terms as is usually implied and that a compromise peace had always been considered ‘on the table.’¹⁸⁷ Sally Harris has pointed out that, though the international and domestic pressure to make such a statement was indeed felt at Downing Street, “the speech reflected the popular mood of the moment... Lloyd George was notoriously unpredictable in his views, paid little heed to political principles, preferring, whenever feasible, to align himself with current popular opinion.”¹⁸⁸ A. P. Thornton has argued that Lloyd George was keen to present his democratic credentials to a constituency he felt might be slipping away from him,¹⁸⁹ while Marvin Swartz has argued that the threat of domestic unrest was a far more

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ David R. Woodward, “The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George’s January 5 War Aims Speech,” *The Historian* Vol. 34, no. 1 (November 1971), p. 39.

¹⁸⁸ Harris, p. 197.

¹⁸⁹ Thornton, p. 158.

significant influence, for which his speech was meant to be an unavoidable conciliation.¹⁹⁰

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that Lloyd George's commitment of the British government to the internationalist or even anti-imperialist principles in his speech was a crucial goal for dissenting writers from the outbreak of the war and one that the government staunchly resisted practically to its end. Although the Prime Minister would very soon retract the essential spirit of his statements, his speech nevertheless publicly committed the British government to a policy of no annexations that would give dissenting statesmen a basis for attacking the imperialistic approach the government would take at the actual peace settlement. The dissenting position for the peace settlement was made even more advantageous a few days later with Woodrow Wilson's declaration of his fourteen points for the peace before the American Congress.

Although the actual influence of the dissenting left on Lloyd George's decision to transition from a balance of power approach to the peace to one friendlier to what historians would come to refer to as a 'Wilsonian' vision for the postwar world, what is clear is that dissenting propaganda during this period generated something of a popular movement for the principles at the heart of their propaganda, and the beginnings of a 'spirit of decolonization' in the name of British liberty. As the next chapter will illustrate, the empowerment of the British democracy to weigh in on matters of imperial, inter-imperial, and international policy would lend significant leverage to the dissenting campaign to limit the maneuver of imperially minded statesmen to 'get what they want' in conquered territories at the peace settlement. In so doing, I argue, they would also

¹⁹⁰ Swartz, pp. 196 and 197.

disable the perpetuation of Victorian imperial ideals in interwar British policy toward the postwar community of nations it now anticipated facing.

Chapter 4: The Problem of the Peace

Even as Lloyd George publicly committed the British Empire to a 'Wilsonian Peace' before the Trade Union Congress in early January 1918 key members of his staff were already engineering a policy for the peace designed to keep control of the territories occupied during the war in British hands at all costs. It is an irony of history that some of Britain's most committed and experienced imperial administrators would have chosen to accomplish that goal by erecting ostensibly self-governing nation-states in those regions. William Roger Louis has suggested that British statesmen planning for the territorial settlement of the First World War could 'hardly have foreseen' that the decision to appropriate the principle of self-determination as a means of preserving postwar imperial sovereignty would result in "the shattering of the British Empire into independent and sovereign states" by the century's end.¹ It seems equally intuitive, however, to say that they would not have settled on such a dangerous precedent for the future of imperial sovereignty as the catalyst for its preservation if less risky options had been available to them.

Historians have tended to emphasize 'Great Power politics' and, particularly, the pressure brought to bear by American President Woodrow Wilson, in explaining the Lloyd George administration's reasoning for getting into the nation-making business in the Middle East.² Although the empowerment of internationalism as a political principle

¹ Louis goes as far as suggesting that such a possibility was beyond the imagination as late as the settlement of the Second World War. Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. xi.

² Significant works that reflect this perspective include Peter J Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy, 1914-1925* (Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Zara S Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: J. Murray, 2001); George Louis Beer, *African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference, with Papers on Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Colonial Settlement* (New York: Macmillan Co.,

on the global level was indeed influencing British policy making, the role of dissenting writers in translating that influence into a formidable political platform of opposition at home has too often been overlooked. The British government's transition from secretly negotiating the division and annexation of enemy territory with their Allies to openly advocating for the creation of independent nation-states in those regions did not happen over night. Rather, as this chapter will show, it was comprised of a series of concessions made by the British government in the face of persistent dissenting critique that tended to take the form of deepening commitments to guaranteeing the postwar independence of Arabic speaking territories that would result in the 'mandate solution' adopted in Paris in 1919.

By the final months of the war, the Lloyd George administration had been brought to see that the legitimacy of the pre-war inter-imperial system was collapsing from the metropolises of Europe to its furthest peripheries. The government's embrace of internationalism, I argue, was firmly grounded in the belief of its statesmen that even the most naïve idealist (be they nationalist, socialist, or internationalist) would be forced to reckon with the indispensability of, at the very least, an imperial framework of administrative authority in the developing world to stave off its collapse into chaos after the war. This chapter seeks to show that dissenting leaders and propagandists played a crucial role in forcing British statesmen to give substance and legitimacy to the façade of self-government they had hoped to impose in the conquered territories. In so doing, I will show, dissenting leaders indirectly empowered the Arab clients through whom the government had intended to rule at the Peace settlement, but also the very nationalist

1923); Duncan H Hall, *Mandates, Dependencies, and Trusteeship* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1972); Quincy Wright, *Mandates Under the League of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930).

movements the British would struggle to suppress in the postwar Middle East. Through these developments, the growing opposition to imperial rule emanating out of the British occupied Arabic speaking territories came into conversation with the anti-imperial rhetoric of the dissenting left that would characterize the domestic and peripheral parameters of inter-war anti-colonialism in the British Empire.

Lloyd George's war aims speech of January 1918 rarely appears in the historiography without some explanation for the *volte face* of the 'official mind' toward a 'Wilsonian' peace settlement that it seemed to reflect.³ It is, perhaps, because of the very completeness of the speech's embrace of a Wilsonian agenda for the peace, however, that historians have tended to overlook its underlying message about the inter-dependence of international security and imperial power. For, embedded in Lloyd George's acceptance of a negotiated internationalist peace in principle, I argue, was the qualifying assertion that total Allied victory and the reestablishment of an Anglo-centric balance of power in Europe were not the antithesis of such a settlement, as dissenting propagandists had claimed, but rather its *sine qua non*.

Going beyond the demands of dissenting propagandists, Lloyd George not only restated the government's commitment to upholding the principle of nationality at the peace, he broadened its definition to include the right of all peoples, regardless of their state of national development, to "self-determination or... government by consent of the governed." Concerning the 'much discussed' inter-Allied Secret Treaties preemptively dividing the Ottoman Empire among them, Lloyd George somewhat ambiguously declared that "new circumstances... have changed the conditions under which those

³ David R. Woodward, "The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George's January 5 War Aims Speech," *The Historian* Vol. 34, no. 1 (November 1971), p. 39. Yearwood, pp. 45-46, Harris, p. 197, Swartz, pp. 196 and 197, Thornton, p. 158.

arrangements were made.” He followed, however, with the definitive admission that “the days of the Treaty of Vienna are long past” and that “no treaty of peace can be worth the paper on which it is printed... [if] government by consent of the governed [was not made] the basis of any territorial settlement in this war.”⁴ From the capitals of Eastern Europe, to the tribal village-councils of Africa, to the heartland of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, he declared, guaranteeing the development of indigenous self-determination against competitive imperial exploitation was, in his view, the surest means to a lasting peace for the postwar world. It was for these principled aims, he proclaimed, that “the British Empire” would be willing to negotiate peace, but also for which “its people are prepared to make even greater sacrifices than those they have yet endured.”⁵

The key to Lloyd George’s position, however, was that none of the original belligerent powers apart from the British Empire were prepared to commit to, let alone enforce, such a guarantee. The “deplorably vague” peace pledges from the Central Powers, he pointed out, had all been “perfectly clear and definite” on one point alone: their demand for the restoration of their territorial possessions at war’s end. Singling out Africa and the Arab world where, un-coincidentally, British territorial claims would prove least negotiable, Lloyd George assured his audience that Germany had no intention of “submitting the future of [her African] colonies to the wishes of the... profoundly anti-German... natives themselves” and that Ottoman statesmen fully intended to keep “the question whether any form of self-government is to be given to Arabs, Armenians or

⁴*Times of London*, Jan 07, 1918. The 1814-1815 Congress of Vienna attempted to settle the political tensions arising from the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire by defining an acceptable balance of power among the empires of Europe through the reallocation of contested territories.

⁵*Times of London*, Jan 07, 1918

Syrians entirely a matter for the Sublime Porte.” In abandoning the Allies she had dragged into the war in favor of a separate peace, Lloyd George intimated, even Russia had also potentially condemned her western borderlands to “rule by the Prussian sword” and “a condition of complete economic and ultimate political enslavement to Germany.”⁶ Although France’s expansionist intentions were well known, they were, tellingly, not discussed.⁷

Whether Lloyd George desired or even believed in the possibility of a genuinely internationalist settlement or not, he certainly did not believe that the inter-imperial tensions and rivalries that had characterized European politics for centuries were likely to vanish at the invocation of the League of Nations.⁸ Imperialism and internationalism were not antithetical systems for Lloyd George because the survival of the latter necessarily required the framework of power that only the former, and particularly the British Empire, could provide. Lloyd George had little doubt that most Britons also tended to view their own support for total victory and an internationalist settlement as similarly complimentary.⁹ Accordingly, Lloyd George’s ‘fight to the finish’ approach to the war and his plans for a ‘balance of power’ settlement went on largely as they had before his speech. Within a month, he had reiterated his Supreme War Council’s commitment to a total Allied victory over immediate diplomatic negotiations.¹⁰ Victories from British and Arab forces in Palestine over the holidays were accordingly rewarded

⁶ *Times of London*, Jan 07, 1918

⁷ The reasons for this will be discussed below.

⁸ On this topic, see Peter J Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace*, pp. 20-22.

⁹ Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), pp. 153-155, Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 203, and Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace*, p. 48.

¹⁰ For a discussion of this declaration in Parliament, see 13 February 1918 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* vol 103 cc148-149.

with renewed forces by the spring to take Damascus while plans to make a second attempt to take Baghdad and begin building Britain's 'New India' in Iraq continued to develop in this direction.¹¹

Nevertheless, Lloyd George's public acquiescence to the demands of dissenting activists also signified a turning point at which popular opinion, perhaps for the first time in British history, began to directly influence how British imperial policy was being made.¹² As Lord Curzon lamented that April to his Eastern Committee, then considering the future of British policy in Middle East, in the wake of "the Prime Minister's statement that the status of Mesopotamia among other countries would be settled at the Peace Conference... our policy [in Mesopotamia] might have to be adapted to certain formulae, such as that of 'self-determination'," which, he noted, had become "increasingly used as a watchword" in public debate over the settlement.¹³ Fearing that "the word 'annexation' [might] appear too inauspicious" under the circumstances, Curzon and his Committee pondered whether "a terminological variant, such as 'perpetual lease,' or 'enclave,' might be found, both to safeguard the reality which we must not abandon, and to save the appearances which the occasion might require."¹⁴ Curzon left no doubt, however, that,

¹¹ For an account of the progress of the 'Arab Revolt' through Palestine and Syria, see George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000), pp. 216-242. For the conquest of Baghdad, see Paul K. Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: Associated University Presses, 1994), pp. 112-172.

¹² For the growth in support for the Labour movement as a whole during this period, see Chris Chamberlain, "The Growth of Support for the Labour Party in Britain," *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 24, no. 4 (December 1973): pp. 474-489. For the role UDC and ILP campaigning played in this growth, see Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party, 1914-1931* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963).

¹³ Eastern Committee Minutes, 5th meeting, April 24, 1918. *NA/CAB/27/24/21*, p. 12. Curzon was referring to Lloyd George's speech of January 1918 in which he stated that Mesopotamia was entitled to her 'own separate national condition' and that her status would be determined by international forum at the Peace.

¹⁴ Eastern Committee Minutes, 5th meeting, April 24, 1918. *NA/CAB/27/24/21*, p. 12.

regardless of the watchwords characterizing the settlement, in determining the fate of British interests in the Ottoman territories, “international control must be resisted.”¹⁵

It was no coincidence that Lloyd George’s appropriation of the pro-internationalist platform from his dissenting critics was accompanied by an all out offensive from his administration against the UDC and ILP in 1918.¹⁶ For just as Lloyd George was attempting to publicly subjugate the principles of an internationalist settlement to the interests of the Empire, dissenting propagandists were expanding the scope of commitment to internationalist principles they were demanding from the government in dangerous ways. By the spring of 1918, ‘liberating’ contested territories from the imperial rule of Britain’s rivals alone was no longer enough in the view of dissenting leaders. If an internationalist peace was going to take root, the process had to begin at home with the voluntary application of the principle of nationality to the British Empire’s own possessions.¹⁷ If the Lloyd George administration proved unwilling or unable to make such a commitment, then Lloyd George would, quite simply, have to go.

The most compelling evidence that the government had no intention of taking even the first step toward such a settlement, as Philip Snowden argued with energy in Parliament and the press over the spring of 1918, was the Lloyd George administration’s refusal to annul or even acknowledge the continued existence of its formal claims to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ For a discussion of Lloyd George’s assault on the dissenting left, see Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 271-296 and 304-306, Swartz, pp. 178-180.

¹⁷ The tendency in the historiography has been to deemphasize the significance of anti-colonial or anti-imperial tendencies in dissenting propaganda. See, for example, Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1939-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 27-81.

territory in the Ottoman Empire as designated in the Secret Treaties.¹⁸ Short of such a gesture, Snowden warned, “if the Government do not realize the state of feeling in the country” concerning its commitment to a negotiated internationalist peace, they now faced a “real danger of revolution” among Britain’s labouring classes.¹⁹

In important respects, the simultaneous revelation and repudiation of Allied claims to Ottoman territories by the Bolshevik government in 1917 had served as a fulcrum in dissenting propaganda for the transference of the principle of nationality from foreign territories alone to British imperial possessions. A crucial component for this transference, however, would lie in the British government’s attempts to legitimate its territorial claims, as well as the anti-democratic manner in which they were made, as, in the words of radical journalist and socialist activist J. T. Walton Newbold, part of British Liberalism’s “historic task... of liberating populations oppressed by alien tyranny.”²⁰ For, in the view of important dissenting writers, the obvious contradiction between such language and the facts on the ground in Mesopotamia brought into sharp relief the duplicitous manner in which the government had traditionally deployed the language of Liberalism, if not an inherent contradiction at the heart of British Liberalism itself. In facilitating this revelation, the example of the Russian Revolutions had also pointed up the clearest path to correcting the situation by forcibly imposing democratic control of the government’s foreign and domestic policy through popular revolution.

In his ILP pamphlet *Capitalism and the War* (1917), Newbold presented the ‘liberation of Mesopotamia’ ostensibly being undertaken by the British government as

¹⁸ *Hansard’s* 13 February 1918 vol 103 cc. 195 and Philip Snowden, *Why the Governments Cannot Make Peace* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1918). *LSE/ILP/5/1918/34*

¹⁹ *Hansard’s* 13 February 1918 vol 103 cc. 195.

²⁰ J.T. Walton Newbold, *Capitalism and the War* (Manchester and London: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1917), p. 10. *LSE/ILP/5/1917/39*.

evidence of British Liberalism's paradoxical pairing of the ideal of political emancipation and the practice of exploitative conquest dating back to the birth of British democracy itself.²¹ The "creed of the capitalist class," for Newbold, British Liberal ideals emerged as the clarion call for a "war for Liberty and Democracy" against the "reactionary political forms" of "the Crown and the landed nobility" of seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain.²² Nevertheless, the victory of British Liberalism merely imbued the capitalist elite with "all the social and political power" they needed to dominate the labouring classes at home for generations thereafter.²³ Echoing the arguments of Hobson and MacDonald, Newbold illustrated how maintaining a class hierarchy at home grounded in capitalist principles eventually necessitated the abandonment of *laissez-faire* trade practices abroad in favor a policy of conquest and the birth of a competitive inter-imperial global economy.²⁴ Even as their government pursued its global bid to "control the governments of other countries... to defend their own interests and injure those of their rivals," the appeal of the language of imperial liberation only grew for the British people, Newbold argued, precisely because Britons generally believed themselves to be a "politically free" people imbued with genuine "democratic sympathies" and a mission to effect "the universal application of their ideals."²⁵

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4.

²⁴ Because "all lands where capitalism has prevailed for some time" faced the related problems of "marketing their surplus production... and maintaining the rate of interest on their growing accumulations of capital," competition for foreign markets grew exponentially from the eighteenth century forward, forcing capitalist governments to turn to "expeditionary forces and invading hordes, instead of commercial travelers and selling agencies" and to abandon *laissez-faire* trade practices in favor of simply "control[ing] the governments of other countries... to defend their own interests and injure those of their rivals." Newbold, pp. 4 and 46-47. For MacDonald on this topic, see Ramsay MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire* (London: George Allen, 1907) and *Labour and International Relations* (Derby: The Derby and District I.L.P.Federation, 1917) *LSE, ILP/5/1917/31*. For Hobson, see J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism, a Study*, (London, G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1902).

²⁵ Newbold, pp. 2, 4, and 46-47.

Mesopotamia, for Newbold, offered an ideal example of the consequences of how the government “practices Liberalism away from home” for democracy both at home and abroad.²⁶ Inter-imperial interest in Mesopotamia stemmed, Newbold explained, from the fact that,

three of the most valuable commodities known to modern commerce can be obtained by whichever group of capitalists can secure the exploitation or development of Mesopotamia and the adjoining British zone of Persia... there is the petroleum for motor and marine transport, and for industrial power; cotton for the mills of Lancashire, and corn for the wheat-pits of the world’s corn exchanges.²⁷

It was the pursuit of these spoils by European concessionists that had ultimately rendered the Ottoman Empire “no longer able to stand alone, and mortgaged to the hilt... with its resources ear-marked, and its future development become the booty for which the investors and contractors... wrangle and struggle.”²⁸ As the latest comer to the Great Game, Germany’s promise to politically and economically ‘liberate’ the Ottomans from such encroachment carried more weight than Great Britain’s, though her intentions were no less self-interested.²⁹ When matters finally came to blows, the British government naturally “conjured up” the ‘spirit of the Glorious Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Rights of Man’ to “march in the Allies’ War for the emancipation of the world,” for this was the language upon which it had always depended to guide the British people into the harness of imperial wars.³⁰ Now it would be the British who would come to Mesopotamia “to liberate its populations, oppressed by alien tyranny, and

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 10 and 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

²⁹ For a discussion of Ottoman views on choosing an alliance with Germany over Britain, see Mustafa Aksakal, “Not ‘by those old books of international law, but only by war’: Ottoman Intellectuals on the Eve of the Great War.,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* Vol. 15, No. 3 (2004): 507-544.

³⁰ Newbold, pp. 1 and 2.

to save them from Turkish misrule and from German exploitation.” No doubt, in the tradition of British Liberal imperialism, the “benevolent protection and generous credit to develop the latent resources of the country, to reclaim it from the wilderness, and to make it safe for democracy” would take the form of “spheres of influence and protectorates.”³¹ Taking his tongue from his cheek, Newbold assured his readers, that “the entwined banners of Britain and France had been set upon the corpse-strewn shores of Gallipoli” and “the tragedy of the Dardanelles [and] the horror of Mesopotamia... had been endured by the exploited repositories of labour-power” for nothing more than “*La Patrie et le pouche*” of Britain’s capitalist ruling elites.³²

In the true spirit of the Glorious Revolution and the Rights of Man, however, the recent triumph of the “Russian democracy” had not only unveiled the anti-democratic practices and policies of the Tsarist government, they had overthrown it.³³ As the UDC argued in *Suggestions for Terms of a Peace Settlement* (1917), the revolutionary government’s repudiation of the Secret Treaties had proven that “no Government can afford to lay itself open to the charge of prolonging the war for the purpose of annexing new territory, either in Europe or outside Europe” without facing consequences at home.³⁴ With Russia’s annexationist claims to Constantinople now moot, the UDC illustrated, the path had been opened to “internationalize... [one of the] great trading waterways of the world” instead of rendering it the contested possession of a single

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2 and 14.

³³ For a discussion of dissenting views of the Russian revolution, see Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution, 1917-1924*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956); Swartz, pp. 147, 157-8, 160-170, and 196; and Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Woodbridge and Rochester, 1998), pp. 142-166.

³⁴ Union of Democratic Control, *Suggestions for Terms of a Peace Settlement* (London: National Labour Press, 1917), pp. 3-4.

power.³⁵ Considering the obvious benefit of this development to international peace, the UDC argued, the remaining Secret Treaties “should be prohibited by international agreement, and should be regarded as void.”³⁶ In their place, dissenting writers demanded a “policy of international control over the Ottoman Empire” to ensure “the maximum of freedom for the various nationalities” concerned as well as to prevent rivalry over their possession from disrupting the peace process or igniting a Second World War.³⁷

It was in the wake of the Russian example that dissenting leaders began to present the Labour movement, led by the ‘peace party,’ as a legitimate alternative to Liberal, Conservative, or Coalition government.³⁸ As Ramsay MacDonald asserted in a 1917 public lecture to the Glasgow ILP branch published later that year as *Patriots and Politics*, “The Labour Party was formed, not to put men into the Cabinet... produce a better Factory Act, a better Wages Board, a better Housing Act... but [to] combine the whole of the working class into a great governing authority following a real Labour policy that will lift us all up into higher and higher levels of human excellence.”³⁹ In other words, MacDonald stated, “the purpose of the Labour Party was to make Cabinets, not to patch them.”⁴⁰ With a negotiated internationalist settlement already at the center of their propaganda and the forefront of the public imagination, UDC and ILP propagandists intuitively organized their political platform around such issues. The coming peace

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 6.

³⁸ For a discussion of the dissenting left’s shift from critique alone to establishing itself as a legitimate political alternative, see Swartz, pp. 199-216, Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914-1918* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996), pp.158-131, and Robbins, pp. 137-175.

³⁹ Ramsey J. MacDonald, *Patriots and Politics* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1917), pp. 9 and 10. LSE/ILP/5/1917/32

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

settlement, in the view of even the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party, as they expressed in the 1917 publication *Labour and the New Social Order*, represented more than just an opportunity to reorganize the political landscape of Europe, it portended the “The End of a Civilization,” in which the Darwinian “individualist system of capitalist production” that had driven the nations and empires into war along with “the very basis of the peculiar social order in which it has arisen” would itself be “buried with the millions whom it had done to death.”⁴¹

In dichotomous terms that echoed the developments in Russia, MacDonald recast the debates over territorial settlements in 1917 as a divergence of ‘aristocratic’ and ‘democratic’ principles generally. Quite simply, he stated in his ILP pamphlet *Labour and International Relations* (1917),

aristocracy goes for imperialism; democracy tries to liberate people... it does not regard people as the personal possession of any man, any house, or any nation. It regards them from the point of view of self-government, and it asks for people to settle the form of their own government.⁴²

In terms of boundary settlement in contested territories, this meant that “the democracy... must settle them in accordance with nationality... [and] historical affinity.” In short, he stated, “if you are a German, go to Germany; if you are English, remain in England... if you are French, then no foreign power can justify you in being taken from your French allegiance.”⁴³ More significantly, however, MacDonald argued that the same principles applied to all peoples under imperial rule as well. “If you are Irish,” he declared, “yes, be Irish and take Home Rule.”⁴⁴ Even in India and all of “those parts of the world that we

⁴¹ Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (B. W. Huebsch, 1918), p. 92.

⁴² Ramsey J. MacDonald, *Labour and International Relations* (Derby: The Derby and District I.L.P. Federation, 1917), p. 7. *LSE/ILP/5/1917/31*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

possess with lower races populating them,” he insisted, “more Home Rule, more self-government, and more and more freedom” generally should be the policy of the British imperial democracy.⁴⁵

Even if only as a political platform of critique, the notion that the principle of nationality or self-determination should be applied universally, even to the possessions of the British Empire, was beginning to draw wider and more vocal support. When Arthur Henderson’s replacement as Chair of the PLP George Barnes insisted in that “the present war was a war fought in order to secure the rights of nations to live their own lives in their own way without interference from their neighbours” upon taking office in August 1917, for example, the *Herald* reported that he had been drowned out by “shouts of Ireland and India” from his audience. The *Herald* followed up the report, however, with a critique of the view, which it associated with men like Barnes and Foreign Secretary Balfour specifically, that, “if Irish people are discontented it is because they are stupid enough not to be able to appreciate the blessings of British rule.” Nor were “the British people” spared by the critique, who, “in their relations to subject races,” according to the *Herald*, “always go on the assumption that British administration and British methods are something other nations should thank God for receiving at the hands of the favoured British people. We appear unable to realize that in the case, say, of Ireland it is the Irish people alone who are the best judges of what is good for themselves.”⁴⁶

In December 1917, Trotsky threw down the gauntlet to the Allied powers over the issue in declaring that, “it is clear that the demand that the right of self-determination be given to the peoples who are a part of the enemy States, and to refuse their right to

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁶ *Herald*, August 23, 1917.

peoples of their own States of their own colonies would mean the putting forward of the programme of the most cynical Imperialism.” If the Allied Powers genuinely believed in the principle of nationality, he argued, they should demonstrate that belief by “giving of this right to the oppressed peoples of their own States.” Their reluctance to do so, he declared, only proved that “they are not less suspicious and hostile in regard to the principle of national self-determination than are the Governments of Germany and Austro-Hungry.”⁴⁷ Even before Trotsky’s declaration had made it into the British press, however, such sentiments were already becoming a characteristic aspect of dissenting propaganda. At, practically, the moment Trotsky was making his announcement, the *Herald* was directly linking the issue of territorial settlements at the peace with that of imperial possessions, arguing that

the question of Turkey in Europe and Asia, together with the right of nations to govern themselves according to their own wishes and desires, must apply to the Turks and Egyptians, Persians and Indians, and nearer home to Ireland, as well as to other nations. There can be no colour or religious bar to liberty.... we hope organized Labour will see that the demand for freedom is one which is worldwide, and must be applied to all the peoples of the world and if Constantinople and the Dardanelles Straits are to be internationalized, so also must all the great highways be free and open for the use of the world--the Panama and Suez Canals, the Straits of Dover, and also the Straits of Gibraltar.⁴⁸

The ILP formally endorsed this universalistic approach to the principle of self-determination at the peace at its Annual Conference in April 1918, declaring

We cannot commit ourselves unreservedly to those parts of the [Labour Party’s Memorandum on War Issues] which deal with territorial adjustment... Our main criticism of the Memorandum is, that while it accepts the principles of self-determination and the right of nationalities to self-government, it applies these principles only to territory in the possession of the Central Powers, and appears to

⁴⁷ Trotsky’s declaration was published in full in the *Herald*, January 12, 1918.

⁴⁸ *Herald*, December 22, 1917.

tacitly deny the rights of subject races and peoples to self-government and self-determination who are under the domination of the Allied Governments.⁴⁹

ILP MP for Bow and Bromley John Scurr further moved that the conference recognize that “the demand of the Indian people be recognized as equal partners within the British commonwealth is essentially democratic, and that to realize the ideal each country must have the opportunity of self-determination. This Conference, therefore, demands that a measure of granting self-government to the Indian people be placed on the Statute Book at the earliest opportunity,” which the conference proceeded to pass into resolution.⁵⁰

Even this was not enough for the editors of the *Herald*, who stated that “self-determination means self-determination; and unless we are willing for Ireland and India to leave the British Empire altogether, if they wish to, and unless we say so explicitly, we cannot press for self-determination upon Austria or Germany or Turkey.”

Principles aside, advocating for the application of self-determination to Ireland, arguably Britain’s first and longest held colonial possession, and advocating it for Mesopotamia, then still only partially conquered and largely unknown territory for most Britons, were two very different things. Without requiring dissenting propagandists be full-fledged advocates for decolonization, however, the political advantages of this tactic can be clearly seen. In light of the legitimacy of even Ireland’s claims to determine her own destiny by the logic of the government’s principled aims for the war, Lloyd George’s unwillingness to openly repudiate his government’s claims to Mesopotamia as designated in the Secret Treaties, even after they had been repudiated by Russia, gave clear indication of the actual limits of the government’s commitment to internationalist

⁴⁹ *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Leicester April, 1918* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1918), p. 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

principles for the peace. The willingness of dissenting leaders to call for the liberation of even Britain's oldest and closest imperial possession, irrespective of whether they actually believed that to be possible or even desirable, galvanized their credentials as an internationalist party prepared to bring the British Empire into an internationalist future.

As Brock Millman has shown, domestic and industrial grievances building over the early years of the war had begun to seize the institutional framework and methodology of critique established by the UDC and the ILP by 1917.⁵¹ Already, Lloyd George's term as Prime Minister had been characterized by an unprecedented development of domestic surveillance and persecution of dissenting voices in order to overcome their influence popularly. By 1918, his administration had been driven beyond these targeted measures by degrees of popular agitation warranting the complete reorientation of home defense planning around the possibility of a Bolshevik style revolution among Britain's labouring classes.⁵² In the wake of the Supreme War Council's February 1918 declaration that, "the only immediate task before them lay in the prosecution, with the utmost vigour... of the military effort," Philip Snowden warned the Parliament that the Lloyd George administration was inviting such a revolution onto their doorsteps.⁵³ In his ILP pamphlet *Why the Government's Cannot Make Peace* (1918), Snowden openly called for it to begin. It is significant that British claims to Mesopotamia were at the heart of his reasoning.

As the baseline of commitment to internationalist principles, "no peace" of any kind, Snowden argued, would be "possible until these Secret Treaties have been absolutely repudiated" by the British and the French as they had been by Russia. The

⁵¹ Millman, 168-196.

⁵² Millman, pp. 271-296 and 304-306.

⁵³ *Hansard's* 13 February 1918 vol 103 cc. 195.

'repeated assurance' from the government that the Secret Treaties still stood and that neither Britain nor France had any intention of receding from them meant, for Snowden, that "the present Governments of Great Britain and France can never make peace."⁵⁴ Therefore, he reasoned, "the statesmen responsible for making them must be driven from power and influence and deprived of any opportunity for again abusing the trust and responsibility which they have enjoyed."⁵⁵

The present British Government must go... and its fall will bring with it the equally impossible Government of France. A Government must take its place which will not be encumbered by commitments to the impossible aims of the Secret Treaties. It must be a Government with clean hands... a Government which can honestly declare: 'We desire no territory, we desire no dominions.'⁵⁶

Irrespective of which party or class was at its helm,⁵⁷ the ultimate goal of such a government should be that "the plain men and women of the world, unskilled in the arts of diplomacy... must have their say," the clearest means to such a goal would be the establishment of a "Society of Nations for the safeguarding of the world's progress towards complete social democracy."⁵⁸ Snowden's inclusion of repudiating the desire for dominions with that of territory was indicative of both the universality of his vision as well as the point from which he believed it should begin.

There is irony in the fact that, by 1918, some Britain's most committed and experienced imperialists came to view making a case for the creation of the first post-colonial nation-states in the formerly Ottoman territories as the key to preserving British

⁵⁴ Philip Snowden, *Why the Governments Cannot Make Peace* (Manchester: The National Labour Press, LTD., 1918), pp. 4 and 6. *LSE/ILP/5/1918/34*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Snowden was critical of Labour, Liberal, and Conservatives alike.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

imperial sovereignty in the postwar world. Perhaps even more ironic was the degree of success, in the short term at least, that the Lloyd George administration would have in effectively 'inventing the Middle East' as a novel set of internationally legitimate imperial protectorates between late 1918 and 1920. In most cases, historians interested in how the British Empire came into the business of nation-making in the Near or Middle East have overlooked domestic dissent and indigenous opposition in emphasizing 'great power politics' as the primary problematic the Lloyd George administration was seeking to overcome through the 'mandate solution' at the Peace Conference.⁵⁹ From early on, however, concern for how British policy in Mesopotamia would be interpreted by the British and Arabic speaking publics clearly shaped the manner in which the region was conquered, administrated, and represented as a political entity. As Lord Curzon would intimate to his Eastern Committee in late 1918, the greatest advantage the government had in making its case for a 'British Mesopotamia' was the fact that it had been making it to the British and Arabic speaking public from the beginning of the occupation itself.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See for example, Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace*; Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*; Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: J. Murray, 2001); George Louis Beer, *African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference, with Papers on Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Colonial Settlement* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1923); Hall, *Mandates*; Quincy Wright, *Mandates Under the League of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930).

⁶⁰ Lord Curzon presents an interesting figure for examining self-determination as a political tactic on the international stage. Curzon inaugurated his political career with a maiden speech in Parliament attacking the logic of Home Rule and the legitimacy of Irish nationalism, positions that would characterize his position from then on. Curzon was similarly staunchly opposed to the idea of expanding suffrage and headed the Anti-Suffrage League in opposition to granting the vote to women. While Viceroy of India in the closing years of the 'Great Game,' Curzon gained a significant, perhaps unparalleled, amount of experience in 'state-making' as a solution to the inter- and intra-imperial problems that characterized the end of the nineteenth century. A great believer in the supremacy of the British in the Persian Gulf, Curzon was instrumental in the establishment of an unofficial British protectorate in Kuwait in 1899. In 1901, Curzon presided over the formal partitioning of the North-West Frontier Province as a way of isolating the problematic Pashtun tribesmen from the rest of the Raj. Similarly, Curzon also oversaw the partition of Bengal in 1905 into Hindu and Muslim provinces as a means of better managing their progress and disabling political agitation. In each case, the creation of separate regions run indirectly through local 'puppet rulers' provided the added advantage of creating a buffer against Russian encroachment into British India.

From as early as 1912, Consul General for Egypt, Horatio Kitchener and his aids had been quietly and cautiously cultivating a relationship with a growing clique of pan-Arab nationalists increasingly disaffected by the exclusionary nature of Ottoman pan-Turainian attitudes toward rule in their Arab possessions.⁶¹ With *al Ahd* and *al Fatat*, two of the earliest organized movements for the emerging pan-Arab movement emanating out of Damascus,⁶² Kitchener identified Sharif Husayn bin Ali, ruler of the Hedjaz, as a prime candidate for alternative leadership in the Arab territories and began courting his loyalties with promises of British support for an Arab rising, should one occur, but also for an independent Arab state in its wake.⁶³ The promise of British support both encouraged pan-Arab nationalists in their petitions for Husayn's leadership as well as softened Husayn's reluctance to moving against the Ottoman state, of which he considered himself a loyalist, if a somewhat disaffected one.⁶⁴

From within a clique of British administrators in Cairo, a vision for the British Empire in the Middle East built upon the experiences of colonial administrators in Asia and Africa emerged comprising a form of indirect rule through Arab clients and the creation of states that would be dependent upon, but not formally a part of, the British

⁶¹ For a discussion of Arab disaffection with Ottoman administration over the end of the nineteenth-century, see Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), Chapter 2. For early British cultivation of this discontent, see Bruce Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), Chapter 2.

⁶² For Arab perspectives on the promise of British and Hashemite support for the movement, see Ameen Fares Rihani, *Muluk Al-'Arab, Aw, Rihlah Fi Al-Bilad Al-'Arabiyyah* (Bayrut: al-Matba'ah al-'Ilmiyah, 1929), Chapter 1.

⁶³ Westrate, pp. 12-16. See also, Timothy Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites, and Arab Rule: 1920-1925* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) and C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), Chapter 1.

⁶⁴ Westrate, pp. 16.

imperial system.⁶⁵ Although this approach raised a considerable amount of tension among administrators over its implications for the future of British rule generally,⁶⁶ the concessions to Arab nationalism and the future Arab state became a clear advantage for Curzon in constructing his 'British case' for controlling Mesopotamia at the Peace Conference.

Curzon left no doubt of the significance of Mesopotamia to the future of imperial sovereignty generally in his opening address to the Eastern Committee in November 1918. The "very difficult task," Curzon instructed the Committee,

of preparing for the Peace Conference the case in regard to the Turkish territories that have passed into our occupation or under our sway... [is] about the most responsible matter that any body of Ministers or officials can be charged with in connection with the war... [for] upon the fate of these territories and the way in which our case is presented to the Peace Conference, and the form of administration to be set up, will depend not only the future of the territories themselves, but also the future of the British Empire in the East.⁶⁷

Curzon admitted that "at first sight, anybody looking back upon the panorama of the last two or three years... of various conflicting voices uttered... [and] different policies... we have committed ourselves to... cannot help being a little confused."⁶⁸ After all, in actualizing British claims to supremacy in the Persian Gulf, two British governments had also been forced to contend with conflicting expectations from British dissenters, Arab

⁶⁵ The colonial administrator most often attributed with the earliest conception of 'indirect rule' that would come to characterize British engagement with the possessions is High Commissioner for Nigeria Lord Frederick Lugard. See Weldon C Matthews, *Confronting an Empire, Constructing a Nation: Arab Nationalists and Popular Politics in Mandate Palestine* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 20-21 and Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), Chapter 2. For the most complete discussion of the 'Arab Bureau' see Westrate.

⁶⁶ For these tensions specifically, see Timothy Paris, "British Middle East Policy-Making after the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools," *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 773-793.

⁶⁷ Eastern Committee Minutes, 39th meeting, November 27, 1918. NA/CAB/27/24. p. 162-3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

nationalists, Ottoman preservationists, French imperialists, Russian imperialists and anti-imperialists, and American internationalists. He reassured the committee, however, that the task of “draw[ing] together and weav[ing] into a single whole all the scattered threads” of British policy in the region would reveal “that all we have done in the past has tended towards a goal by no means so obscure as one might think at first sight.”⁶⁹ Moreover, he prophesied, with a bit of finessing, arranging for postwar British rule in Mesopotamia could be done in a manner that “would amount to a guarantee of good government to everybody concerned.”⁷⁰ The reason this was so, I argue, is that the British government’s preferred tactic for overcoming public criticisms or even opposition to its policy of imperial conquest in the Ottoman territories from either British or Arab peoples was to publicly commit itself, if only by minute degrees, to their eventual political liberation.

Beginning with the earliest public declaration of British aims in Mesopotamia, given by Viceroy of India Charles Hardinge in Basra on February 4, 1915, Curzon argued that the rather ambiguous declaration clearly suggested “a very definite promise” that, although “there was no assurance that we intended to remain... in no circumstances would those territories then occupied be given back to the Turks.”⁷¹ As Curzon well knew, Hardinge desired the permanent elimination of the Ottomans to open the way for the creation of a ‘second Egypt’ in Mesopotamia through large-scale Indian colonization after the war.⁷² Nevertheless, his declaration served to assuage the immediate fears of Mesopotamian notables that permitting or even abetting the advance of British forces

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163 and 165.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 163-4.

⁷² Robert J. Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858-1947* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 137 and Davis, *Ends and Means*, pp. 65-66 and 100-101..

would result in retribution from returning Turkish administrators after the war.⁷³ In Britain, the press release published in the *Times* a mere four days later served to quell suspicions of the government's motives by presenting Harding's declaration as a response to the popular demand among the notables of Basra that "the British occupation would be permanent."⁷⁴ Hardinge's apparent restraint in refusing to accommodate that demand beyond holding out "the assurance that the future will bring... a more benign rule" to Mesopotamia would have seemed, for most Britons, clearly in line with Asquith's 'benevolent disinterest' in imperial gain for the war.⁷⁵

Curzon gave some detail as to the actual agreement made between Sharif Husayn and High Commissioner for Egypt Sir Henry MacMahon in late 1915 and early 1916 negotiating Britain's guarantee of an independent 'Arab state,' of deliberately ambiguous extent and definition, in exchange for Husayn's promise of tribal support against the Ottomans where he could rally it and political support for British interests in the region, also ambiguously defined, after the war.⁷⁶ Playing upon the ambiguities of the agreement, comprised of notes exchanged between Husayn and MacMahon over several months, Curzon indicated that a clear case could be made that the British had, in fact, promised "to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs within... practically all the Arab-inhabited territories from Mersina and Adana down to the Persian Gulf"

⁷³ Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Iraq in World War I* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2006), p. 93 and Davis, *Ends and Means*, p. 54.

⁷⁴ *Times of London*, February 8, 1915.

⁷⁵ *Times of London*, February 8, 1915.

⁷⁶ For a discussion of the MacMahon-Husayn Agreement, see Abdul Latif Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1914-1921* (London: Luzac, 1977); Kedourie, Elie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations, 1914-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976; and Antonius, pp. 164-183 and 413-427.

while maintaining the right to impose “a special measure of administrative control” over the regions of British interest in Mesopotamia.⁷⁷

As Curzon envisioned it, the “special measure of administrative control” would amount to “a British protectorate in everything *but the name*,” an “Arab Façade” in which such regions as Mesopotamia would be “administered as an Arab province... in accordance with existing laws and institutions” under a staff of “local rulers or governors,” but actually run through a shadow administration of British officers taking their orders from London.⁷⁸ The advantages of the Arab Façade were manifold and understood by the committee through such dispatches as High Commissioner for Egypt Sir Reginald Wingate’s discussion of the subject presented to the Committee the June prior. As Wingate illustrated, organizing British policy around the façade of “giving a civilized and sympathetic government” and “safeguarding the nationalist aspirations and legitimate rights of the Arab people” would likely elicit “the consent of the populations [which] must be obtained to the form of government we shall prescribe for them... if we are faithfully to practice the principles of our Alliance against the Central Powers, and to submit proposals that will commend themselves to the Allied Councils.”⁷⁹ Moreover, by operating through an alliance with Sharif Husayn, the British would have “no difficulty in obtaining... by treaty, all the terms of which need not be made public, such guarantees of preferential treatment as will prevent other European Powers... from acquiring concessions to buy land, create banks, build a railway etc.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Eastern Committee Minutes, 39th meeting, November 27, 1918. NA/CAB/27/24. p. 163-4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164. Emphasis added.

⁷⁹ Wingate to Balfour, June 11th, 1917, NA/CAB/27/22/49.

⁸⁰ Wingate to Balfour, June 11th, 1917, NA/CAB/27/22/50.

With Sharif Husayn's son Faysal leading the so-called 'Arab Revolt' alongside British forces in Palestine and Syria and, Curzon believed, being ostensibly "in favour of the British in Palestine... of the British in Irak, and of a purely nominal Arab administration there," the faith of British policy makers in Husayn's intention to support the British case seemed well founded.⁸¹ Accordingly, Curzon continued, Lieutenant-General Stanley Maude was instructed to announce to the people of Mesopotamia upon taking Baghdad in March, 1917, that it was "not the wish of the British Government to impose... alien institutions" upon them, but rather that "the Arab race may rise once more... to be united with [their] kinsmen in the north, east, south, and west, in realizing the aspirations of [their] race."⁸² As Curzon suggested, the announcement was "intended to indicate" British support for "some sort of Confederation of Arab States in that part of Arabia" as had been promised to Husayn.⁸³

The press release published in the *Times* immediately following Maude's declaration, however, suggests that the announcement was intended to convey something more to the British public. To begin with, Maude referred to Sharif Husayn as the 'King of the Hedjaz' for the first time in a public statement that strongly indicated a formal alliance between the British government and that 'state,' only recently designated as such largely by Husayn's revolutionary status.⁸⁴ Secondly, the announcement was accompanied by King Husayn's formal statement of congratulations to Maude for the "liberation [of Baghdad] from the criminal hand of the Turanians," for which he

⁸¹ Eastern Committee Minutes, 39th meeting, November 27, 1918. *NA/CAB/27/24*. p. 164.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the relationship between the status of Husayn and the Hedjaz, see the Minutes of the Eastern Committee, November 21, 1918, *NA/CAB/27/24/157-8*.

repeatedly praised god, and the British government's reciprocating exchange of thanks with him.⁸⁵

The uncharacteristic attention drawn to the moment in Britain did not end with that announcement, however. In the weeks to follow, Maude's victory was memorialized as inaugurating the 'salvation of the Garden of Eden' with the designation of April 13 as 'Mesopotamia Day,' complete with national fundraisers and parades in which, according to the *Times*, "nearly everyone in town seemed to have one of the medals with the camel device hanging from red, white, and blue ribbon, or a bunch of the 'apples of Eden'."⁸⁶ The *Times* followed up with a series of articles by Mesopotamia correspondent Edmund Candler describing the benevolent resuscitation of progress in Mesopotamia as British officers gave order to anarchy, settlement to tribal feuds of long standing, and the means to rebuild the glory of ancient Babylon to its long suppressed peoples.⁸⁷ As Mohammad Majd has shown, the startling contradiction of Candler's reports with the utter destitution Mesopotamian Arabs were actually experiencing under British occupation was more clearly reflected in Maude's proclamation a few months later that "any non-military persons caught taking photographs of any kind are liable to the punishment of death."⁸⁸ A glimpse of those conditions would, of course, become public knowledge with the publication of the Mesopotamia Commission Report that June. The façade of Britain's

⁸⁵ *Times of London*, March 19, 1917.

⁸⁶ *Times of London*, April 14, 1917.

⁸⁷ See, for example, *Times of London*, May 19 and June 20, 1917. On the topic of the salvation of Mesopotamia as a war aim, see Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 5.

⁸⁸ Majd, p. 360.

policy of benevolent liberation would similarly collapse a few months later with the revelation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement in the Fall of 1917.⁸⁹

That Curzon would refer to the Sykes-Picot Agreement as “unfortunate,” “embarrassing,” and “hanging like a millstone” around the neck of the Committee more than a year before Woodrow Wilson would even become aware of its existence speaks to importance the Committee attached to how British policy was being perceived both at home and in the Arab World.⁹⁰ As previous chapters have shown, the revelation of the Secret Treaties ignited months of intense public debate over war aims in Britain resulting in Lloyd George’s January 5 speech recognizing the right of the Ottoman territories to nationality.⁹¹ A similar message was delivered to Husayn the day before Lloyd George’s speech by Head of the Arab Bureau in Cairo Commander David Hogarth declaring that “the Entente Powers are determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world. This can only be achieved by the Arabs themselves uniting, and Great Britain and her Allies will pursue a policy with this ultimate unity in view.”⁹² No doubt, the renewed commitment to the MacMahon-Husayn Agreement was influenced by Faysal’s threat to end the Arab Revolt upon hearing of Sykes-Picot in the fall of 1917. Faysal’s aggressive reminder to the British that the Arabs were fighting for their independence and unity and not for the substitution of one imperial overlord for another elicited a series of telegrams from the British denying Sykes-Picot

⁸⁹ I discuss these developments in Chapter 3.

⁹⁰ Eastern Committee Minutes, 39th meeting, November 27, 1918. *NA/CAB/27/24*. p. 163. The UDC reported Wilson’s denial of any knowledge of the Secret Treaties as late as October 1919 in that month’s issue of the UDC’s *Foreign Affairs*, *Morel/F6/19*, *LSE*.

⁹¹ I discuss these developments in Chapter 3.

⁹² Report of a Committee on Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca, *Cmd. 5974* (1939), p. 48.

outright and assuring him and his father of their shared investment in future Arab independence.⁹³

When these renewed promises were made by the Lloyd George administration to the British and Arab people in January 1918, policy planners in London began re-engineering their approach to how Mesopotamia was to be managed as both an administrative and a publicity problem. Just as Curzon was encouraging his Eastern Committee to come up with a more attractive term for annexation, Deputy Under Secretary of State for India Sir Arthur Hirtzel similarly advised Acting High Commissioner for Mesopotamia Sir Arnold Wilson that,

it is very important that you... should know what are the real political tendencies here at this stage of the war... Entirely different currents are flowing now and we must shape our course to them if we are going to get what we want in Iraq. The old watch words are obsolete, and the question is how we are to secure what is essential under the new ones. This thing can be done, but a certain re-orientation is necessary. The 'Arab façade' may have to be something rather more solid than we had originally contemplated.⁹⁴

Perhaps understandably, Wilson, who had been busily realizing his own vision for a 'New India' in Mesopotamia, was deeply hostile to what he perceived as a loss of control of the Arab façade as an imperial tactic, and he was not alone.⁹⁵

Although the potential collapse of the 'British case' for maintaining imperial sovereignty in the Ottoman territories before the international community at the Peace Conference was a key concern for imperial planners, the possibility that the case would be made only too well, to the detriment of imperial sovereignty in principle, was also a

⁹³ Beatrice Erskine, *King Faisal of Iraq: An Authorised and Authentic Study* (London: Hutchinson, 1933), p. 76 and John Bagot Glubb, *Britain and the Arabs; a Study of Fifty Years, 1908 to 1958*. (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1959), p. 73-4.

⁹⁴ Hirtzel to Wilson March 12, 1918 *Sir Arnold Wilson Papers BL/ADD/52455/C*

⁹⁵ Wilson, Arnold T. *Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917, a Personal and Historical Record*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 240-241.

serious consideration. Commenting on Wingate's call for a more robust Arab Façade in June 1917, Director of Military Intelligence Sir George Mark Watson Macdonogh warned that, although it was "necessary to disguise [our Arab] policy by sympathetic treatment of Arab aspirations and to keep in view our relations with the Arabs after the War" it was equally imperative that whatever degree of self-government was to be implemented "be regarded as a means to an end and not an end in itself."⁹⁶ Writing to Political Secretary Sir John Evelyn Shuckburgh nearly a year later, seasoned Political Officer in Mesopotamia Richard Marris scoffed at the simplistic dichotomization of the Victorian ideal of 'good government' into either the brutally exploitative "German idea" of colonial rule or the naïve "American-peace-term-socialist-Bolshevik-idea" of 'self-government' then being promoted by pacifist propagandists.⁹⁷ Like Wilson, Marris personally considered Mesopotamian Arabs to be backward peoples incapable of managing their own affairs.⁹⁸ Actually adopting a "policy of self-determination for the Arab (without camouflage)" in the region, he argued, would be tantamount to throwing it away when what should be done was to "make no bones about it but simply occupy the

⁹⁶ Observations by Director of Military Intelligence on Sir R. Wingate's dispatch, July 6, 1917. NA/CAB/27/22/49.

⁹⁷ Marris to Shuckburgh, April 3, 1918. *BL/L/PS/111/134/P1359/1918*. For a consideration of changing views of the 'civilizing mission' in relation to ideas of trusteeship during this period, see Michael Adas, "Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology," *Journal of World History* 15, no. 1 (March 2004): 31-63; Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Decolonization," *Journal of World History* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2004); and Glenda Sluga, *The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics, 1870-1919* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), especially Ch. 2.

⁹⁸ Peter Sluglett offers an analysis of the administrative and ideological challenge these initiatives posed to the Indian administrators and a pro-imperial Parliament in the years preceding the occupation of Mesopotamia as one explanation for the delay in adopting them. "Most British officials who worked in India or the Gulf area," writes Sluglett, "... believed that they alone were capable of ruling the populations in their charge, and that any delegation of authority would be disastrous." Sluglett notes a deep "mixture of contempt and fear expressed toward the 'educated native' in the correspondence between Bombay and London, describing an "elaborate moral superstructure" of racial superiority upon which the justification British rule of indigenous Indians was made. "To men of this stamp," writes Sluglett, "the notion of leaving India, or devolving some Imperial power into Indian hands, was tantamount to a betrayal, and signified the abandoning of a sacred trust." Sluglett, Peter. *Britain in Iraq, 1914-1932*. (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), pp. 15-16.

country and rule it with an eye to justice, benevolence, and progress.”⁹⁹ Fearing that, “in trying to make the camouflage seem real,” British policy makers had come to believe in their own rhetoric of regenerating Mesopotamia under Arab auspices, Marrs inquired of his superior, “don’t you think” that in policy planning at least, “the ‘noble lie’ will be better than the ‘lie in the soul’?”¹⁰⁰

To A. T. Wilson’s horror, on November 8, 1918, the British and French governments jointly declared their shared goal of “the complete and final liberation” of Syria and Mesopotamia to be followed by “the setting up of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations.” For the first time, Curzon indicated, the British had formally “brought on to the *tapis* the idea of self-determination” and openly “encouraged all those unfriendly to us to think that an Asiatic rather than a British form of government might be set up.”¹⁰¹ As Britain Cooper Busch has shown, however, in wringing what amounted to an emergency propaganda statement out of the French, the Anglo-French Declaration “was bought only at the price of the first actual steps of the French political and administrative control in Syria which the... declaration was designed specifically to avoid.”¹⁰²

George Antonius has argued that the main reason for making the Anglo-French Declaration was to rein in Faysal’s increasingly nationalistic activity upon taking Damascus that October. Once the city had been taken, Field Marshal Edmund Allenby informed Faysal that his victory would be rewarded with British oversight until the end of

⁹⁹ Marrs to Shuckburgh, April 3, 1918. *BL/L/PS/11/134/P1359/1918*.

¹⁰⁰ Marrs to Shuckburgh, April 3, 1918. *BL/L/PS/11/134/P1359/1918*.

¹⁰¹ Eastern Committee Minutes, 39th meeting, November 27, 1918. *NA/CAB/27/24*. p. 165.

¹⁰² Busch, p. 197.

the war, whereupon control would be transferred to France.¹⁰³ Faysal responded through a series of acts of defiance, including the declaration of Syrian independence and an attempt to extend that status to Lebanon within days of his victory. Tensions between Faysal and Allenby quickly found expression in nationalist agitation in Damascus and Beirut that Faysal claimed he would be hard pressed to contain without some sort of reassurance from the British that their alleged annexationist arrangements with France were not in fact being realized.¹⁰⁴

As Busch has shown, however, by November 1918, the British had been in negotiations with the French over an alternative statement of policy to reduce the blowback of the revelation of Sykes-Picot by the Bolsheviks for months.¹⁰⁵ A crucial difference between the position of the British and the French often overlooked in discussions of the Anglo-French Declaration is the presence of organized opposition to an annexationist agenda at home. As the above has shown, dissenting attitudes toward Lloyd George's unwillingness to publicly annul Sykes-Picot, which the Anglo-French Declaration was tantamount to achieving, could not have been less friendly.¹⁰⁶ In France, however, no such organized opposition existed. To the contrary, the imperialist movement was in full swing over the course of the war and in full support of annexations in Syria.¹⁰⁷ Even weeks after the Anglo-French Declaration had been made, the French remained "most tenaciously" committed to the terms of Sykes-Picot which, in the view of Curzon and the Committee, meant that the British government would remain "bound hard

¹⁰³ Erskine, p. 91 and Malcolm B Russell, *The First Modern Arab State: Syria Under Faysal, 1918-1920*, Studies in Middle Eastern History; no. 7; (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1985), p. 15.

¹⁰⁴ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000), pp. 274-275.

¹⁰⁵ Busch, pp. 191-204.

¹⁰⁶ These attitudes are discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁷ See C.M. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner, "The French Colonial Party and French Colonial War Aims, 1914-1918," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 1974): pp. 79-106.

and fast by this deplorable Agreement.”¹⁰⁸ Although the announcement of the Anglo-French Agreement would serve its purpose in assuaging, for the time being, the fears and dissenting activities of Faysal in Damascus, the concessions the British had been forced to make to the French to get it only exacerbated the looming problem of French ambitions at the Peace Conference and the potential political fallout it portended.

As Foreign Affairs Lord Robert Cecil noted to the Committee shortly after the Anglo-French Declaration was made, Britain remained desperately dependent upon the support of the United States, which, he pointed out, “will only support us if they think we are going in for something in the nature of a native Government, and there are signs... that the Americans are not so friendly disposed to us as they were, certainly as we hoped they would be in these matters.”¹⁰⁹ Worse still, “Hussein,” Cecil warned the Committee, “is very suspicious of anything which leads him to think that [the Allies] are not in earnest in setting up in some form or another an Arab Government” and that any indication that he “did not trust our pro-Arab feelings... would have a very disastrous result at the Peace Conference.”¹¹⁰ Like the dissenting propagandists at home, Faysal remained deeply suspicious of the Lloyd George administration’s commitment to Sykes-Picot and had made clear his intention to obstruct it.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Eastern Committee Minutes, 39th meeting, November 27, 1918. *NA/CAB/27/24*. p. 163.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Although Faysal had been accepted by the British for his seeming willingness to represent British interests as his own as much for his notoriety or legitimacy, as the Conference approached, the location of Faysal’s loyalties came increasingly into question. In a preparatory interview with Shuckburgh in late December, Faysal assured his advisors that, although he remained confident that the British Government intended to “do what was right” in regions under their influence, he had been deeply disturbed to discover the “bargain[ing] away in advance... [of] Arab rights in Syria” to the French in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Comparing the French to “a particularly malignant type of leech found in Arabian wells,” Faysal noted the barbarity of French rule in North Africa and stated the dislike and distrust of the French among the Arabs who “have no desire to come under the influence of a nation whose civilization they regard as in no way superior to their own.” Faysal took the opportunity to respond to the intimation by the Foreign Office that, should the French insist on the fulfillment of Sykes-Picot, the British would find it difficult to refuse, by

At the height of the Eastern Committee's conundrum that December, Field Marshal Jan Smuts introduced an approach to the Peace Conference that promised to resolve most of the tensions involved. Beyond merely presenting the 'mandate solution' for the territorial problem for which he is widely credited, Smuts suggested that the his government come to terms with the fact that the inter-imperial system of governments and politics as they knew it had come to an end and begin re-thinking the role the British Empire would play in the international system that was to come. "Our old historic policy... to maintain the balance of power" Smuts argued, had been made obsolete by the war. With "the defeat of Germany and the disappearance of Russia and Austria," he argued, the balance of power had given way to a "new tripartite game" with "only three first-class Powers in the arena of world-politics—The British Empire, France and the United States." The question they faced, he asserted, was whether "to side with France or America as a matter of large policy" in the postwar world. France, he argued, was by far the less attractive choice.¹¹²

The reason Smuts rejected France as a postwar ally out of hand was precisely because of her tenacious commitment to balance of power politics and diplomacy. Smuts described France as an historically "bad neighbour" of a characteristically "militant and imperialist... temperament" and tending toward policies with "a nasty trail of finance and concession-hunting over them." It was reasonable to expect that France would use the peace to stake her claim as "mistress of the Continent" as well as "the principal heir to

suggesting that the British fulfill their obligations to their Allies at their own expense and not that of the Arabs, that if the British did acquiesce to the French, it would only confirm the apparent post-war weakness of the British, and that such a course of events would shortly lead to a war between the Arabs and the French. Interview between Faysal, Shuckburgh, and Lawrence December 27, 1918
BL/L/PS/11/141/P5119/1919, Doc 5341

¹¹² War Cabinet. Our Policy at the Peace Conference. Note by General Smuts. For the King and War Cabinet, December 03, 1918. *NA/CAB/29/2*.

the Turkish estate.” Her goal, he prophesied, would be to “keep Germany in a state of humiliating subjection” and to compel “Syria and Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia” to her will, creating “a hopeless atmosphere for future peace and international cooperation.” The immediate problem this attitude posed for the British, Smuts suggested was that attempting to accommodate French aims for the peace would place British statesmen “in flagrant contradiction to all our openly professed ideal war aims.”¹¹³ Should the British turn to the United States instead, however, her difficulty with France would instantly become an unprecedented opportunity.

Already, he pointed out, the Dominions of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand had begun to drift, economically and militarily, into a semi-dependent relationship with the United States. Fighting this natural gravitation seemed pointless, to Smuts, especially considering Britain’s own dependence on American economic, military, and political support. Rather, Smuts encouraged “the King and the War Cabinet” to view “the two great democratic Commonwealths” of the US and the British Empire as being ideologically and historically linked “in a common destiny.”¹¹⁴ The coming Peace Conference presented an historic opportunity for “signalizing” a new world order around Anglo-American cooperation precisely because of the opposition of President Wilson to French ambitions for the settlement. French designs in the Ottoman territories, Smuts pointed out were “a direct negation of the policy which President Wilson stands for” which he would naturally be forced to veto.¹¹⁵ If Wilson could return to the American Congress with an established League of Nations, Smuts asserted, “I believe he will be satisfied, and will be prepared to drop some of the other contentious points he has

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35

unfortunately raised.”¹¹⁶ By standing behind Wilson and against the French, Smuts suggested, the British had the power to give Wilson the only thing he desired from the Peace.

Among the ‘contentious points’ raised by Wilson was the legitimacy of imperial sovereignty for the postwar world taken up and transformed into a major political issue at home by the dissenting left. Looking past the principles and platforms of critique, however, Smuts pointed out the obvious fact that the “break-up, on an unprecedented scale, of the old political system of Europe” had also created a massive and variegated sovereignty crisis “le[aving] behind large derelict territories and set[ting] free many small peoples who are politically untrained and either incapable of or deficient in power of self-government.”¹¹⁷ If the League of Nations hoped to keep the global sovereignty crisis created by the collapse of half the world’s empires, Smuts anticipated, it would necessarily require the aid of those that were left. In short, Smuts theorized, should the League of Nations be given responsibility for the development of territory X., “in exercising governing functions in respect of territory or people X, it will have to depute State A., to act as its agent of mandatory subject to general instructions which will lay down the limits within which the interference of A. in the affairs of X. is to take place.” Although the state acting in the name of the League would be subject to certain limitations of maneuver, the system would nevertheless “give most of the greater Powers the chance to control or administer some territory or territories.” Using the League as a means of designating that authority would make Wilson’s, perhaps naïve, dream “a practical reality from the very commencement of the new order... and thereby secure us

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the goodwill and support of President Wilson at the Conference... [while] prevent[ing] arrangements being carried through which are not in our interests nor in the general interests of Europe or of the countries to be parceled out.”¹¹⁸

As Curzon saw it, Smuts’ vision for the postwar world largely diffused the threat to British interests posed by either France or the United States and permitted British statesmen to meet the expectations of both Britons and Arabs for an internationalist settlement. As he put it at the next Committee sitting a few days after Smuts’ memorandum,

when we sit down to the Peace conference, President Wilson might say, and might get us out of a great difficulty by saying, ‘Here we are inaugurating a new era of free and open diplomacy; the various States of Europe have bound themselves by all sorts of unscrupulous secret engagements in the earlier years of the war; before we enter into any arrangements for the future let us sweep all those off the board; let the Sykes-Picot Agreement go, the Agreement with the Italians go, and let us start with a clean slate?’¹¹⁹

Through such an approach, Curzon concluded, the British delegates would now be free to “play self-determination for all it is worth wherever we are involved in difficulties with the French, the Arabs, or anybody else, and leave the case to be settled by that final argument knowing in the bottom of our hearts that we are more likely to benefit from it than is anybody else,” to which Cecil, Smuts, and the Committee heartily agreed.¹²⁰

As the Peace Conference approached, the criticisms of dissenting leaders reflected the sensitivity of the Lloyd George administration to any sort of democratic interference in managing the peace settlement. Writing for the *U.D.C. Magazine* just before the

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37. The mandatory system gestured at in this memorandum would, of course, be famously refined in Smuts’ publication *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion*.

¹¹⁹ Eastern Committee Minutes December 5, 1918 p.185 *PRO, CAB 27/24*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188

Conference that January, Seymour Cocks informed his readers that the manner in which the government was already compromising democratic principles at home affirmed the UDC's suspicions that it was merely "preparing the way for a secret and undemocratic peace."¹²¹ Against the protestations of Parliament, Lloyd George chose to deny British representatives the right to weigh in on the selection of delegates for the Conference, ensuring, for Cocks that they would be "men of the type" of Curzon, Balfour and Lord Reading, "statesmen of whose ability there is no question, but of whose democratic sympathies there is, to say the very least, considerable doubt." Rather than ending the wartime censorship of Foreign Press cablegrams with the conclusion of hostilities, as President Wilson had done, Lloyd George insisted it remain in place until after the peace had been concluded. Moreover, while Lloyd George publicly acknowledged that the settlement would be a 'principle item' for the general election later that year, "at the very same time the Censor was sending a private and confidential letter to important editors asking them in the name of the Prime Minister not to discuss various vital issues of the Peace Settlement at all." All told, Cocks suggested, Lloyd George seemed to be doing his utmost "to withhold from the people the information they need in order to arrive at any well-informed judgment upon the various issues which will be discussed and settled at Versailles."

Although Wilson had declared himself "in favour of 'open covenants of peace openly arrived at'," Bonar Law, Cocks reported, had replied definitively in the negative when asked in Parliament "whether the Government would use its influence to secure that the sittings of the Peace Conference shall not be held in secret." When asked if he

¹²¹ *UDC Magazine*, January 1919. LSE/Morel/F6/16.

“intended to take steps to secure that any agreement for peace should in general principles be in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the members of the House,” the very minimum of democratic consideration, Bonar Law replied that “the Government must, I think, be the interpreter of the views of the House and the nation in this matter.” In short, British democracy would be not only disallowed from influencing the manner in which the peace would be settled, they would remain completely in the dark about its organization until well after the fact of its completion. Cocks was “quite certain,” considering the great lengths to which the Cabinet had gone to veil its undertakings at Versailles, that “we shall have the diplomats at their old work again, disposing of territories without any reference to the wishes of the peoples, just as they did at the Congress of Vienna... this sort of diplomacy flourishes in the darkness.”¹²²

Writing for the *Herald* in early January, Henry Brailsford warned his readers that, although “the Balance of Power [seemed] broken beyond all repair” by the war, the victorious Allied leaders were not the enemies of the balance, but its architects. All that the removal of the Central Powers from the equation had accomplished, Brailsford argued, was to allow their rivals to operate “without the prudence and without the restraints which accompany an equipoise of force” that had existed, however precariously, in the years before the war. Lloyd George’s determination to advance his peace agenda “without check from public opinion” as well only verified, for Brailsford, that postwar international government would amount to little more than “a despotism which continues the old politics of interest, force, and Imperialism” if left to the victorious Allied leadership. Describing the settlement to come, Brailsford predicted that

¹²² *Ibid.*

Four of five Great Powers would meet together, compose their rival interests, and then, with unlimited force behind them, call upon the rest of mankind to ratify their decisions... The new Concert will use force all the world over—to intervene in Russia, to partition Turkey, to administer derelict Empires, to put down any brand of Socialism of which it disapprove... to govern all that once was Austria, Russia, and Turkey, all Africa and much of Asia as well... it will sanctify power in a new and sinister sense.¹²³

As the Conference got underway, the *Herald* produced a series of articles submitted by its entire editorial staff¹²⁴ confirming the inauguration of a “World Government by Star Chamber” dominated by the self-same “rulers and diplomats” who had so recklessly committed their “peoples to courses bound to end in war” in the first place. As was inevitable under such statesmen, the *Herald* argued, the “old system which it was the object of the war to destroy is actually now in operation in Paris in full vigour.” Already, international government was “reducing democracy to a farce of a tragedy” as the citizens of Allied nations were denied even a basic knowledge of the policies their government was adopting and territorial settlements were made “without the knowledge of the people whose destinies are thus being settled for generations, it may be for centuries.”¹²⁵ Just like the imperialist aims that had caused and prolonged the war, the realization by European statesmen of their “grandiose dreams of imperial might” would only be ‘sprung upon a restless world’ as a *fait accompli* only after the ‘Hush-Hush Peace’ had long been settled.¹²⁶

In rallying against the British government’s suppression of their voice at the Peace Conference, dissenting leaders were far from alone. As Erez Manela and others

¹²³ *Herald* January 11, 1919

¹²⁴ George Lansbury, Gerald Gould, Francis Meynell, WN Ewer, William Mellor, WP Ryan, Robert Williams, George Belt, John Scurr, HN Brailsford, WH Harford

¹²⁵ *Herald*, January 25, 1919.

¹²⁶ *Herald*, January 25, 1919.

have shown, the sheer breadth of global demand for representation as the Conference approached necessitated a rather strict scheme for defining precisely who would be permitted to attend and in what capacity that left a large number of aspirants bitterly disappointed.¹²⁷ The problem became a particularly acute one for the Lloyd George administration as it was faced with nationalistic demands for representation from literally every corner of the Empire. In managing this demand, the British government took unprecedented steps toward formally codifying, in many respects for the first time in its history, the many components of the British Empire in relation to one another and to outside powers.¹²⁸ Although these steps were taken as a matter of expedience and necessity in the name of British imperial interests in the moment, they would also be the harbingers of the Empire's prolonged demise.

The variegated and contradictory manner in which the Lloyd George administration managed the demand for intra-imperial representation is especially interesting when considered in relation to the creation of what was arguably the first post-colonial nation-state of the Hedjaz by the British delegates. In addition to the British democracy itself, significant demands for individual representation were made by Canada, South Africa, Australia, India, and Egypt. As American scholar and founder of the International Labour Organization James Shotwell pointed out in 1937, the accommodation of such a variety of claims posed two related problems. On the one hand, permitting the delegates to attend as independent representatives would have called

¹²⁷ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹²⁸ As American scholar and founder of the International Labour Organization James T. Shotwell had argued as early as 1937, however, "the most revolutionary act of the Paris Peace Conference" was not the invention of the modern nation-state, but the unprecedented designation of the British Empire as "a sovereignty among the other sovereign States" for the first time in its history. James Thomson Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference*, by James T. Shotwell (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), pp. 414-415.

forth a clear contradiction with British imperial sovereignty in those regions. On the other, including them all under the umbrella of the British Empire would have meant an embarrassing preponderance of 'British' votes on the Council.¹²⁹ In either event, the contradictory claims of India and Egypt for independence from the Empire and those of South Africa and Australia for the right to expand it into new territories would have devastated Curzon's 'British case' for postwar imperial sovereignty.

After much heated debate during the Preliminary Peace Conference at Paris in mid-January, the objecting American delegates finally conceded to accord a special status to Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and India equal to that of the more important small powers, such as Belgium or Serbia, but collectively designated as Plenipotentiary Delegates of the British Empire.¹³⁰ In other words, the Dominions were made full members of the League of Nations but remained non-sovereign states under the auspices of the British Empire.¹³¹ As a mere Protectorate, Egypt was given no such accommodation, but rather was placed under marshal law against the protestations of its nationalist leadership who were either jailed or deported.¹³² Each of the 'White Dominions' were to be represented by their respective Prime Ministers and accompanying plenipotentiary delegates. For India, however, where no Premiership had been established, Secretary of State for India Edwin Samuel Montagu acted as

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 414-415.

¹³⁰ L. C. Christie "Notes on the Development at the Paris Peace Conference of the Status of Canada as an International Person," July 1, 1919 *NA/CAB/29/80*.

¹³¹ Shotwell, pp. 173, 174, and 414-417.

¹³² Manela, pp. 63-76 and 141-158.

representative, accompanied by two Indian plenipotentiaries Satyendra Prasanno Sinha¹³³ and Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner “carefully chosen” for their presumed pliancy.¹³⁴

On January 18, the very eve of the Peace Conference opening, Balfour insisted that the Hedjaz be admitted to the Conference as a “constituted state,” rather than simply a “state in the process of formation,” and be given two full delegates.¹³⁵ Moreover, he requested the alteration of the first two articles of the Peace Conference Regulations limiting the representation of “states neutral, in the process of formation, or currently in state of rupture with enemy states” to sessions discussing questions directly relating to their destinies in order to allow the Hedjazi delegates to be present and speak at crucial closed sessions relating to the British case for the Middle East generally.¹³⁶ Even more extraordinary, the Hedjazi delegates, Faysal ibn Husayn and Rustum Hayder, were recognized as authoritatively speaking for “all Arab peoples” in the formally Ottoman territories comprising present day western Saudi Arabia, Palestine/Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.¹³⁷

Recalling his experiences as Faysal’s Chief Political Secretary in the weeks preceding the Conference, Hayder offered some additional insight into the willingness of the British not only to place known anti-imperial nationalists in a position of speaking in

¹³³ Satyendra Prasanno Sinha was a British-trained lawyer from a wealthy Hindu family. Sinha was a prominent member of the Indian government from 1903 and, upon completing his duties as a representative at the Peace Conference, was appointed as the first Indian Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India as well as the first Indian member of the British House of Lords.

¹³⁴ Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner was reformist ruler of Bikaner, now Rajasthan, who commanded the Bikaner Camel Corps in France, Egypt, and Palestine and served as the only non-Anglo member of the Imperial War Cabinet during the First World War.

¹³⁵ United States Department of State, *Council of Ten Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Peace Conference, 1919*. Volume III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 599

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 600

¹³⁷ For discussions of inflating the status of Husayn, Faysal, and the Hedjaz for the Conference, see Minutes of Eastern Committee November 21, 1918 *PRO, CAB 27/24* and Note from Foreign Office to Hussein to be delivered through Lawrence, November 8, 1918 *BL, L/PS/11/141/P5119/1919, Doc 4997*

favor of British policy, but to effectively create a state in the process. Despite the “riotous madness” surrounding the arrival of President Wilson in Europe for the Conference, not to mention his global popularity as the face of internationalism, Hayder was ambivalent. Preliminary negotiations had led him to believe that, “like the French, America now wishes to delay full independence” in the contested territories.¹³⁸ Presumably referring to the concept of mandatory tutelage, Hayder worried that, despite Wilson’s lofty rhetoric, “the blunder of the eighteenth-century; the division of Poland” was about to be repeated “with the Arab Nation.”¹³⁹

The reception of Hayder and Faysal in Paris, by the government and the press, had been cold and disparaging.¹⁴⁰ Hayder speculated on the differences between the West and the East that might justify the Western presumption that Arabs somehow required their tutelage to survive as a nation in the supposedly dawning “century of freedom and independence.” He seemed to find irony in the vehement intolerance of Islam as backward “fanaticism” exhibited by the supposedly rational and intellectually free European Christians when it was they who were attempting to impose their forms of thinking about government and politics on others while Muslims were seeking their political independence.¹⁴¹ In the end, he concluded, it was simply the presumption that “Western blood” was inherently superior to “Eastern blood,” with reason or logic playing no part in the matter.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Rustum Haydar, *Mudhakkirāt Rustum Haydar* (Beirut: al-Dār al-‘Arabīyah lil-Mawsū‘at, 1988), pp. 195 and 197.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 199.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-9.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 198-9.

Recalling Faysal's conversations with the French delegates in January, Hayder noted that although they claimed to have no desire to annex Syria, they did not hesitate to infer that, should Faysal attempt to force their hand by demanding too much too soon, as Egypt had done to the British, Syria would suffer the same fate as the Egyptians by the hand of the French.¹⁴³

Although the French delegates did not raise significant objections in the moment, French Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephan Pichon had already made his views on the equivalence of rights between smaller and greater powers known to the British government the November prior. Anticipating just such a move, Pichon protested that the "Little Powers of recognized States and those in process of formation... are not equivalent... the Great Powers had not yet agreed on their views as to representation of various categories of belligerents... enemies and neutrals... it will be necessary to define who shall sit and at what kind of meeting." Concerning Faysal in particular, Pichon stated that,

He cannot speak in the name of Arab populations who cannot in the present state of things be freely, validly and seriously consulted: Congress must therefore remain quite free to examine Arab question alone or after hearing this Delegate of King of Hedjaz. No Arab kingdom has been recognized by Allied Powers as a whole... Arab kingdom or kingdoms have therefore no real existence and have at present only a hypothetical character even between France and England¹⁴⁴

British Ambassador to France Lord Derby was instructed at the time to assuage French fears by diffusing the significance of Faysal's role and status as merely "the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

¹⁴⁴ *BL, L/PS/111/141/P5119/1919, Doc. 5248* Mr. Grahame (Paris) to Foreign Office, November 24/1918

representative of our co-belligerent and Ally King Hussein” at the Conference in a purely advisory and observational capacity.¹⁴⁵

Despite having ‘invented’ the Hedjaz as a nation, the British Empire delegates nevertheless made every effort to convince President Wilson that imperial annexation was preferable to the issuance of mandates. Delegates from South Africa and Australia objected that the mandates system was merely an unnecessary complication that would hinder bringing ‘good government’ to colonies so long denied it by the Germans.¹⁴⁶ Clémentine Simon, of the French representatives, praised the civilizing spirit of France’s imperial legacy, arguing that, now “all the great Powers worthy of the name, considered their colonies as wards entrusted to them by the world... higher moral principles now guided the nations.”¹⁴⁷ Lloyd George pointed out that, far from profitable ventures,

Colonies, as far as Great Britain was concerned, did not mean a division of spoils, but rather the incurring of expenditure. Great Britain had no Colony from which a contribution towards the national expenditure was obtained. He thought the same consideration would present itself were the mandatory system applied to Mesopotamia, Syria, and other parts of the Turkish Empire. Whoever took Mesopotamia would have to spend enormous sums of money for works which would only be of profit to future generations. It might pay in the future, but who was to pay at present?”¹⁴⁸

In reply, Wilson expressed his frustrations with the rhetorical haggling that amounted, in his view, a “negation in detail--one case at a time--of the whole principle of mandatories.”¹⁴⁹ There was no question, to his mind, that, despite the arguments to the contrary, the spirit of internationalism and that of imperialism were “radically different...

¹⁴⁵ *BL, L/PS/111/141/P5119/1919, Doc 5248* FO to Lord Derby November 23, 1918

¹⁴⁶ United States Department of State, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 745-7

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 760-61

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 747.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 763.

ideas.” For whereas either might be “exercised in the same spirit and under the same conditions... the former assumed trusteeship on the part of the League of Nations... the latter implied definite sovereignty” of one power over another. This state of affairs, he inferred, had led directly to the war that had brought them to the table in the first place and would, if permitted to revive, force a “return to the system of competitive armaments” and render the League of Nations helpless to perform the task it had been set of guaranteeing real international security and “a laughing stock” in the eyes of the world.¹⁵⁰ The mandatory system, like the League itself, Wilson reminded his opponents had arisen in response to “the feeling which had sprung up all over the world against further annexation.”¹⁵¹ Dismissing derisive speculation on the details of the mandate system, Wilson insisted that, lest “the League of Nations be discredited from the beginning,” a public commitment to trusteeship specifically over annexation must be unanimously made.¹⁵² Among the somewhat begrudging acceptances, Lloyd George’s is telling. “As far as the British Empire was concerned,” he stated, “most of the conquests had been accomplished by British troops, and as far as those territories were concerned Great Britain would be prepared to administer them under such conditions as might be laid down by the League of Nations.”¹⁵³

In contrast to the ambiguous and, at times, arbitrary manner in which nations and empires had been defined in relation to one another for the Conference, on February 6, 1919 Amir Faysal delivered what was arguably the most comprehensive case for national sovereignty heard before the Council of Ten. Defining the region for which spoke,

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 765.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 741.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 742-43.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 764.

Faysal asked that the Council choose to recognize the right to independence of “all the Arabic-speaking peoples in Asia, from the line Alexandretta-Diarbekir southward.”¹⁵⁴ “The Arabs,” Faysal reminded his mostly European audience, “were an ancient people, civilized and organized at a time when the nations represented in this room were unformed.” The natural frontiers and resources of the Arabic-speaking world, he argued, had nurtured and sustained the linguistic, racial, social, and economic homogeneity that had characterized it from the birth of civilization to the present.¹⁵⁵ Although “Arab religious differences were being exploited” by European powers for centuries as a means of dividing and conquering them, in the struggle for their own collective independence, Faysal argued, the Arabs had experienced “welding of the faiths, in their common service of the principle of nationality.”¹⁵⁶

The enduring unity and “capacity to play their part in the world” of the Arabs had been inarguably demonstrated, he suggested, by the many “Syrians, Lebanese, Hejazis, Mesopotamians, Palestinians, and Yemenis” that had organized and fought together along side the Allies in the Eastern Theater of the war. As legitimate belligerents, and therefore, legitimate victors in the war, the Arabs had suffered their share of losses in the name of their own independence, which they had, in fact, already declared upon entering

¹⁵⁴ The Alexandretta-Diarbekir line ran in a slightly North-Eastern direction from the city of Alexandretta, located near the North-Eastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea, into the South-East Turkey to Diarbekir, located due North of the Eastern border of present day Syria. This ambiguous demarcation could, potentially, have been meant to include all of the present day nation-states of Syria, Palestine/Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Bahrain, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates, and Oman with the possibility of intentionally excluding most of Iraq, Palestine/Israel, and Saudi Arabia. However, in his rationale for the claim to independence, Faysal makes clear claim to independence for all Arabic-speaking peoples. Minutes of the February 6th meeting of the Council of Ten in United States Department of State, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p.889.

¹⁵⁵ United States Department of State, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 891

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Damascus.¹⁵⁷ The gesture of respect and political maturity they had exhibited in lowering their flag to make way for “temporary Military Governors,” he informed the Council, would never have been made had they known that it would be perceived as “in compliance with a secret treaty.”¹⁵⁸

Concerning the matter of mandates, Faysal admitted that the infrastructure of government for the Arab state would “have to be buttressed by the man and material resources of a great foreign power,” but stressed that this necessity had been made so by centuries of European encroachment and exploitation.¹⁵⁹ Although assistance was needed and welcomed from “everyone who wished them well,” the Arabs “could not sacrifice for this help any of the independence for which they fought,” and Faysal “hoped no Power imagined that it had the right to limit the independence of a people because it had material interests in their country.”¹⁶⁰ He asked the Council of Ten that, “on the principle of self-determination,” the Arab provinces be permitted to determine for themselves the “nature of the assistance they required,” requesting that, in the case of any ambiguity, an international inquiry be made to determine the wishes of the peoples concerned.¹⁶¹

When asked by Wilson if the Arabs would prefer one or many mandates, Faysal responded that “his principle was Arab unity. It was for this that the Arabs had fought. Any other solution would be regarded by the Arabs in the light of a division of spoils after a battle.”¹⁶² The “future confederation of liberated Arabic speaking Asia” Faysal

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 890.

¹⁵⁹ Faysal's statement to the Council of Ten, January 1, 1919 *BL, L/PS/11/141/P5119/1919, Doc. P771/19*

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of the February 6th meeting of the Council of Ten in United States Department of State, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 891

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Palestine, “for its universal character” was left to the side for “mutual consideration of all parties interested.” Minutes of the February 6th meeting of the Council of Ten in United States Department of

envisioned, however, had no imperial ambitions nor wished to impose itself upon any peoples. If some parts of Lebanon, he offered by way of example, wished to retain their independence from surrounding regions their wishes would be respected and they would be welcomed to participate in the confederation if they wished.¹⁶³ This was the spirit in which Faysal asked the Council and the League of Nations envision their support of the Arabs, “not to force your whole civilization upon us,” as he had phrased it in his written statement to the Council, “but to help us to pick out what serves us from your experience,” although in return for such benevolence, the Arabs could “offer you little but gratitude.”¹⁶⁴ “The Arabs had tasted slavery,” he lamented, and it was their hope that “the Conference would not thrust them back into the condition from which they had now emerged.”¹⁶⁵

Speaking a few days later, Faysal’s co-delegate for the Hedjaz, Rustem Haidar was more direct in his views of the mandate.

There is a word in the text which seems to me rather vague--the word ‘Mandate’. What does it mean? We do not exactly know. And yet on the interpretation of that word will depend the future of all the nations which, till today, have been oppressed by tyrants... For the present I only wish to say that the nations in whose name I speak intend to remain free to choose the Power whose advice they will ask. Their right to decide their fate in the future has been recognized in principle. Very well! But you will allow me to say, Gentlemen, that a secret agreement to dispose of these nations has been prepared about which they have not been consulted... I express the wish that the Powers interested in this question should declare on the first opportunity that this agreement concluded without their assent should of full right be pronounced null and void.¹⁶⁶

State, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 891

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 890.

¹⁶⁴ Faisal’s statement to the Council of Ten, January 1, 1919 *BL, L/PS/11/141/P5119/1919, Doc. P771/19*

¹⁶⁵ Minutes of the February 6th meeting of the Council of Ten United States Department of State, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 891

¹⁶⁶ Preliminary Peace Conference, Protocol No. 3, Plenary Session February 14, 1919 discussing Art. 19 (later Art. 22) of the Covenant of the League of Nations in United States Department of State, *The Paris*

Many dissenting writers initially welcomed the announcement of the acceptance of the mandate principle as a victory for the principles of democracy and nationality on a global level. As the *Herald* reported, the “decision that the German Colonies and Mesopotamia are to have their fate decided by the League of Nations” clearly meant that “Wilson is winning.” It was “not only fair but essential to say,” however, “if the right prevails at the Paris Conference, it will be because of the pressure of Labour ... and a steady and continuous pressure of rank and file opinion evincing itself in propaganda, in resolution, in what is called ‘unrest’.”¹⁶⁷ For it had been British Labour that had “demanded... the internationalization of all of Africa, and for self-determination for the Asiatic countries.” If “Syria and Mesopotamia and Arabia are to have self-government if they wish it,” the *Herald* reasoned, it would be because of the efforts of Labour-minded Britons.¹⁶⁸

The *Herald* was also suspicious, however, of Lloyd George “behaving more like a socialist Premier than the leader of a Tory Government” at the Conference¹⁶⁹ and recognized the possibility that “that the whole ‘mandatory’ business is intended as mere dust in the eyes of Labour.” It was the responsibility of Labour, therefore, “to ensure that the offer of self-government to the people of the Turkish Empire is a genuine one, and that it is not perverted into a mere device of transferring them by vote of some tame

Peace Conference, 1919, vol. 3, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 229.

¹⁶⁷ *Herald*, February 1, 1919.

¹⁶⁸ *Herald*, February 8, 1919.

¹⁶⁹ *Herald*, February 8, 1919.

packed assembly to the rule and exploitation of one of the Powers... that the 'mandate' is a reality, the 'trusteeship' a fact."¹⁷⁰

This responsibility was compounded by the potential precedent the mandates had set for the future of democracy throughout the British Empire. For, "at the worst," the *Herald* anticipated, "the definite admission by the Powers that Syrians and Arabians are 'fit' for self-government is enormously important for it renders unanswerable the claim of India and Egypt to Home Rule." Comparing Amir Faysal to the Conference delegate for India, Lord Sinha, the editors noted that Faysal was "a Federalist" who legitimately represented the desires of the Arab people that "that each part [of the Arab speaking world] shall be self-governing" and that they do not desire the country developed for them—they wish to do this for themselves." In contrast, "Lord Sinha, although an Indian, represents the British Government. The people of India have had no voice in his selection, neither have the Indian rulers of those parts of India which have remained under Indian rule." If, in fact, the British government was sincere in its support of Faysal and "the [Arab] Confederation is set up... the news of a new sort of government and administration... will reach India, and the movement in that country will get on very quickly," begging the question, the writer openly wondered, of "whether, after all, this sort of thing is the beginning of the end of white domination in the East."¹⁷¹

The fact that the League of Nations had chosen, in the end, to apply the mandate idea "exclusively... to the conquered colonies and territories of our enemies" was, according to J. A. Hobson writing for the *UDC Magazine*, an affirmation that the "perpetual autocracy of the foreign Ministers of the five great Allied Powers" remained

¹⁷⁰ *Herald*, February 8, 1919.

¹⁷¹ *Herald*, February 22, 1919.

in full force at the heart of the League. Was not such an ostensibly “a just and humane tutelage,” he inquired, “equally applicable to the backward protectorates of the Allies.”¹⁷²

At the ILP’s annual conference that April, Philip Snowden, characteristically, took the critique a bit further in his opening address from the Chair. The mandatory system, he declared, was little more than a camouflage for the “determination on the part of the respective Allied Powers to secure the imperialistic aims embodied in the Secret Treaties.”¹⁷³ The National Administrative Council of the ILP concurred, referring to the “wranglings between the Allies about the division of the spoils of war” as a perversion of “President Wilson’s fourteen points” and proof “of the I.L.P. contention that the war was essentially imperialist and capitalist in its aims and objects.”¹⁷⁴ Although the map of the world had been redrawn from Paris, railed R. C. Wallhead, “there was not a single people in the whole of the world,” the British democracy included, “that had been consulted for one minute by any of their governments and rulers so far as the peace that was then being concluded.”¹⁷⁵

However, Snowden declared, although they had not yet realized it, the leaders of the “old order of class domination and economic slavery” had invited their own demise to their doorstep. For in “shattering” the expectations of democracy around the world, the Allied governments had inspired the “new forces and new ideas” that were animating a “new democracy.” “The world,” Snowden declared, “and not a geographical area, is the new nation. That is the idea that is inspiring the world revolutionary movement.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² *UDC Magazine*, March 1919 LSE/Morel/F6/17

¹⁷³ *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Huttertsfield, April, 1919* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1919), pp. 37 and 38.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36 and 38.

Accordingly, an “emergency resolution” was called for to address “not only [the situation] with Ireland but the system of repression [as a whole] including Egypt and India.”¹⁷⁷ The draft submitted combined the imperial issues of Ireland, Egypt, and India in demanding “the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, and the recognition of that form of Government which is desired by the Irish people,” declaring that “the claims of the Indian and Egyptian peoples to self-government as essentially just,” and insisting “that they be granted at the earliest opportunity.”¹⁷⁸

Speaking on the subject of the peace settlement at the Socialist International Conference at Berne that February, Ramsay MacDonald warned his audience that “there was no greater danger to any cause than that everyone should profess to believe in it. Everyone believes in the League of Nations now.”¹⁷⁹ MacDonald disparaged the League as a “Holy Alliance which would be imposed upon [the people], dressed up in a democratic garb and appealing for confidence in democratic language.” What was needed, he declared was “a League of Peoples not of Peers... and a court to which all oppressed nations could come, bring their complaints, make their charges and ask for judgment, and where they will be assured of receiving justice, fair play and an honourable judgment.”¹⁸⁰ By ‘all oppressed nations,’ MacDonald assured his colleagues, he meant also those under British rule. Singling out Ireland, India, and Egypt specifically, MacDonald sought to clear the air of any misconceptions as to Labour’s attitude toward British possessions in declaring himself and British Labour “in favour of a system of control for the colonies established by international guarantee under the

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁷⁹ John de Kay, *The Spirit of the International at Berne* (London: Published by the Author for Free Distribution, 1919). p. 31.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 36 and 38.

League of Nations... not for the purpose of applying it to other peoples and empires, but honestly to apply them to the British Empire and trying to make the empire a lever for the liberation of all the peoples that come under its sway.”¹⁸¹ It was in this respect, he argued, that the efforts of the Berne delegates had the potential of remaining “memorable forever in history for having taken the first substantial step towards the union of the whole human race.”¹⁸²

The resolutions of the Conference on territorial questions were telling in their interventionist tone. Arguing that the “arbitrary and enforced union of people of different nationality in a single State has been and will always be a cause for international disputes and therefore a danger to peace,” the Conference declared “the nationality question [a matter of] international importance.”¹⁸³ As the main embodiment of international law, the League of Nations was meant to ensure that ‘nationals’ remained free to “decide to which State they will belong within the League of Nations,” experienced “a minimum of national rights,” and were free to “exercise of the rights of free self-determination” in preparation for membership to the League of Nations. As a means of insuring this relationship between the League and ‘disputed territories,’ the Conference specifically took a stand against “any attempts to falsify the application of the principles hereby proclaimed” and specifically rejected

- 1) The rights of the victors to the spoils of war and all the agreements by which States have been drawn into the war with the object of increasing their territory at the expense of other nations
- 2) The fixing of frontiers according to military or strategical interests
- 3) Forced or veiled annexations claimed on the ground of so-called historic rights and so-called economic necessity

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁸³ “General Resolution on Territorial Questions” Berne Conference, in de Kay., pp. 85 and 86.

- 4) The creation of 'faits accomplis' by the military occupation of disputed territories
- 5) The establishment of any economic or political sphere of influence¹⁸⁴

In closing, the Conference "appealed to the working-classes of every country to exert themselves to the utmost to compel their governments to respect these principles in the interests of the conclusion of a lasting peace."¹⁸⁵

Just as dissenting leaders were organizing to use the precedent of the mandates to full political advantage, Lord Milner and the British Empire Delegation were diligently working to overcome precisely the kind of limitations of the sort the Berne Conference was attempting to impose. Writing on the subject that March, Lord Milner prodded the delegates to "clear our minds as to what we wanted" out of the mandates "before an Inter-Allied Commission was appointed to decide who were to be the various mandatory Powers, and what the nature of the authority to be conferred upon them."¹⁸⁶

Milner acknowledged that developing the mandate principle would be tantamount to "opening a new chapter in International Law." Legal details, however, were not his primary concern ("I leave it to the lawyers to say where the 'sovereignty' will in any case reside"). What did concern him most, he explained was how "to get rid of the existing sovereignties." For, "before we can apply any new system of government to these countries," he reasoned, "we must get hold of them."¹⁸⁷ The key, for Milner, was to arrange for the Central Powers to cede the territories in question to the Allied Powers

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Memorandum by Lord Milner for the British Empire Delegation March 8, 1919 NA/ADM/116/3247 doc. 15.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

directly before the assignment of mandates came before the League. In this way, he concluded, the mandatory powers “will be in the position of a man receiving a property” already in his possession, albeit “subject to certain servitudes.”¹⁸⁸

There was no question for Milner that the destiny of the mandated territories would be determined by imperial powers, rather than nationalist aspirations. Balfour’s analysis of the pretense of self-determination, proto-national status, and assisted development was particularly scathing.

Where and what are these ‘independent nations’? Are they by chance identical with Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine? If so, the coincidence with the Sykes-Picot arrangement is truly amazing, for no such idea was present to the minds of those who framed it... it never occurred to them that they had to deal at all with nations in the modern and Western sense of the term... Are we [now] going ‘chiefly to consider the wishes of the inhabitants in deciding which [mandatory power] is to be selected? We are going to do nothing of the kind... they may freely choose; but it is Hobson’s choice after all.’¹⁸⁹

For Balfour, the question of which powers would take responsibility for which territories was one already determined by a long history of inter-imperial relations in which complex systems of influence and patronage had been long established. Abandoning the practical efficiency of that framework in the name of an overly idealistic conception of self-determination, he believed, was not only the very height of naiveté, but an unconscionable neglect of political and practical realities that no statesmen with a modicum of experience in extra-national government could even entertain.¹⁹⁰

Milner’s engagement with the problem of boundaries was also telling. He recognized that in defining the mandates, “ethnic affinity will no doubt be regarded as a

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Balfour Respecting Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia *NA/FO/406/41*. Also see Wm. Roger Louis, “The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System, 1919-1922,” *International Organization* Vol. 23, No. 1 (Winter 1969), pp. 88-89.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

basic principle” to the mind of League committees and indigenous peoples. However, such affinities tended to obstruct the neat division of territory among interested powers. In the proposed state of Armenia, for example, “different, and indeed hostile races are intermixed. On the other hand we have in fixing the boundaries of Syria and Mesopotamia, to deal with the exactly opposite problem, viz: how to escape or at least to minimize the administrative difficulties of dividing authority over one and the same race between two different mandatory Powers.” The case of Arabia was particularly problematic in relation to inter-imperial competition after the peace. As was well known, “declarations made by several of the Allied Powers with regard to Arabia amount to a promise of complete independence,” meaning that the assignment of an Arabian mandate to Great Britain “would appear to be running counter to her own declarations about independence and sovereignty.” Nevertheless, “no other Power could be made the mandatory without infringing the rights of Great Britain. Arabia is, therefore, apparently a special case, which needs to be dealt with by some other means than treating it as a mandated territory.”¹⁹¹

Despite these concerns, the allocation of the mandated territories in almost precisely the manner desired by the British and French governments and, tellingly, designated by the Secret Treaties, would be achieved with remarkably little difficulty. By April 1920, the lines drawn through ethnic, religious, and economic communities throughout the formerly Ottoman territories in the name of European imperial interests would be formally approved by the League of Nations at the San Remo Conference. As the next chapter illustrates, however, circumventing the very framework of international

¹⁹¹ Memorandum by Lord Milner for the British Empire Delegation March 8, 1919 *NA/ADM/116/3247 doc. 15*.

law and principles undergirding the territorial settlement the British were attempting to legitimate would give Arab nationalists precisely the legal tools they would need to dismantle imperial legitimacy in their respective states over the inter-war period. It was no coincidence that the most influential advocates in support of their efforts would be the leaders of the British labour movement and international socialism generally.

Writing in 1918 as an advisor to the British government on the Middle East, eminent British historian Arnold Toynbee had warned Shuckburgh that the events of the war would bring the interests of socialism and Islam closer together. The affirmation of international legitimacy experienced by the Turkish and the Arabs through their alliances with Germany and Britain respectively was not dissimilar, Toynbee argued, from that experienced by the Bolsheviks in their victory over the Tsar. Because of its long history of suppression and exploitation, global Islam, he warned, was an ideal conduit for the Bolshevik critique of capitalism and imperialism. Through Bolshevik propaganda, Russian and Indian Muslims had already come to “believe themselves to be face to face with the same enemy—namely, ‘Capitalism’, or in other words the European Middle Class, which they regard as the exploiter of the labouring class in Europe and of the Moslems in the East. Scratch the Tartar and you find the Bolshevik!”¹⁹² “The Islamic consciousness,” he argued, “like the European Labour Movement, is a growing international force... passionately demanding that the principle of ‘No Annexations’ (neither ‘open’ nor ‘veiled’) shall be applied to Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan.”¹⁹³

Once the mandates had been officially allocated in May 1920 and the Ottoman

¹⁹² “The Formula of ‘the Self-Determination of Peoples’ and the Moslem World.” Arnold Toynbee to Shuckburgh at the Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information January 11, 1918, *BL/L/PS/11/141/5072*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

Empire formally dismembered, the *UDC Magazine* announced that “the last item in the process of carving up the world on the basis of Mr. Asquith’s and Sir Edward Grey’s Secret Treaties of 1915-16 has now been settled... and Lord Curzon’s old dictum that the western boundary of India was the Euphrates has been exceeded by the facts. It is to-day the Mediterranean. To the British Empire of the East is now added the British Empire of the Middle East.”¹⁹⁴ Attributing the settlement directly to the “insatiable... lust of Empire among the ruling classes of Britain,” the *UDC* lamented that “the point has been reached when our people are like to die of a surfeit of Empire” at what was imagined to be the height of international sentiment. For, in addition to having “Ireland in a state of war, Egypt kept down only by force, and India seething with discontent,” the British people now faced a “Turkish Treaty [that] creates as many potential wars as it contains clauses.”¹⁹⁵

The next month’s issue dedicated a special supplement to “India and the Empire,” in which the opening article declared that “Britain stands on the threshold of one of the gravest crises in her imperial history,”

Upon the series of events, culminating in the Amritsar massacre... has come the Turkish Treaty... it violates in most flagrant fashion the principle of nationality and self-determination... affronts Mohammedan... religious sentiment in its profoundest depths. It breaks innumerable pledges given to India, and to the world... [and] makes a Turkish war in which the Arabs—also flouted by the Treaty—will probably make common cause with the Turkish Nationalists inevitable.¹⁹⁶

In addition to uniting in cause the Arab and the Turkish nationalist, the editors argued, the “blunders and follies of the past five years have united Hindu and Mohammedan in

¹⁹⁴ *U.D.C. Magazine* June 1920.

¹⁹⁵ *Foreign Affairs* June 1920.

¹⁹⁶ “India and the Empire” *Foreign Affairs* June 1920.

India, just as they have united Copt and Mohammedan in Egypt.” Although “the working man in this country may not at first sight perceive that the religious convictions of 70 millions of Indian Mohammedans concern him in the least,” they were, in fact his duty to consider and respect. The British worker was a member of the British Democracy, and “British Democracy is responsible for the Empire. It may dislike the Empire. But the Empire is a fact, and the responsibility is a fact. And so long as the Empire exists, the British Democracy will pay for the mistakes in imperial policy committed by its rulers, just as it pays for their mistakes in foreign policy. And imperial policy can never be separated from foreign policy: it is, indeed, part of it.” Moreover, the “policy of imperial expansion coupled with repression to which our present rulers appear to have committed themselves” and the working classes had tacitly accepted, had put “22,846 British troops in Constantinople, 32,068 in Egypt, 23,014 in Palestine, and 70,603 in Mesopotamia, and they are costing us at the present moment just under £40 millions sterling.” It was a short cry from the present situation to one of open conflict that would, once again, demand a conscripted army in Britain.¹⁹⁷

A series of articles then set about critiquing the Turkish Treaty from the related perspectives of Indian Muslims and British Labour. Leaders of the Caliphate Movement such as Muhammad Ali and Said Husayn explained to British readers how putting aside the jurisdiction of the Caliph in favor of “non-Muslim control in any shape or form in the ‘Island of Arabia’ as divined by Muslim religious authorities... including, as it does Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia besides the Peninsula of Arabia” amounted to a violation of the foundational premise of respect for religious principles and practice at the center of

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

Anglo-Indian relations, of the pledges given to Indian and Arab Muslims as well as the British people by the British government over the course of the war, and of the principle of self-determination for which the Peace generally and mandates specifically stood. Muhammad Ali, head of the Khilafat Movement, used strongly socialistic language to describe both Islam and its attachment to the Caliph as inherently internationalist, socialist, anti-imperialist, and decidedly more modern-minded than the 'rights of conquest' approach to the Peace taken by imperially-minded British statesmen seeking to complete the archaic task of the Crusades in taking down the Ottoman Empire in the name of Anglo-Saxon Christian world supremacy.¹⁹⁸

Stressing the imperialistic attitudes of British statesmen and its incompatibility with self-determination, Leland Buxton stated that "there is nothing surprising in the fact that the Prime Minister should have insisted once again on violating the principle of self-determination, but it *is* somewhat surprising that he should have pursued a policy which is suicidal from the Imperial point of view."¹⁹⁹ Why, asked 'Q' in "Self-Determination and the Turkish Treaty," had Lloyd George disregarded his obligation to respect the standing rights to religious freedom as well as the emerging rights to self-determination of his Muslim subjects and subjected the British people to the wave of violent animus such actions portended? The answer for 'Q.', the editors of *Foreign Affairs*, and the Khilafat leadership was the same: "There is oil in Mosul, and the only self-determination that is therefore possible, is that the British shall demand a mandate in

¹⁹⁸ "An Imperial Crisis: The Significance of the Indian Khilafat Delegation," by A.R.S.; "Islam and the Khilafat," by Muhammad Ali; and "The Relations of Great Britain with the Muslims of India as they are Affected by the Turkish Treaty," by Said Husayn, in *Foreign Affairs* June 1920.

¹⁹⁹ Leland Buxton "The Turkish Treaty" *Foreign Affairs* June 1920.

Mesopotamia. Verily, as a member of the Indian Khilafat Delegation has said, the Prime Minister is pouring Mosul oil over the troubled waters of Mesopotamia!”²⁰⁰

The reaction to the issuance of the mandate in Mesopotamia was immediate and would largely confirm the fears and criticisms expressed by the dissenting left. As Amal Vinogradov has shown, the prolonged disruptive impact of the occupation on political and socio-economic life in Mesopotamia had raised tensions as high as the appearance of Faysal at the Peace Conference had raised expectations of independence in Mesopotamia.²⁰¹ When regional notables affiliated with various sectarian, regionalist, and nationalist movements approached their local British administrators in Shamiya in June 1920 to protest the mandate and declare independence, they were, unsurprisingly rebuffed. By early July, three fourths of the country had risen in an ‘insurrection’ that would last for months, costing hundreds of British lives and tens of thousands of pounds to put down.

In Mesopotamia, the 1920 uprising would quickly come to symbolize the birth of Iraqi nationalism in opposition to British imperialism, a status it still retains for many Iraqis.²⁰² For the dissenting leaders then taking the reins of the British Labour movement, it would signify the vindication of their critique of the war, the peace settlement, and British imperial democracy. As the next chapter will show, the Mesopotamia Rising of 1920 galvanized the connection dissenting writers had been attempting to make between

²⁰⁰ “Self Determination and the Turkish Treaty,” by Q and “Oil versus Honour” by Paris correspondent with commentary from the Ed.s of *Foreign Affairs*

²⁰¹ Amal Vinogradov, “The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1972): 123-139.

²⁰² Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 38.

the struggles of the British people for a genuinely democratic political system, nationally and internationally, and those of imperial subjects throughout the British Empire working against the legitimacy of the imperial government from the periphery.

Chapter 5: A Potemkin State? The Early Influence of the British and Iraqi Press on the Anglo-Iraqi Nation Making Project

In what is presumably an apocryphal story, in the late 18th century, minister to Russian Empress Catherine II Grigory Potyomkin allegedly constructed hollow façades of villages along the banks of the Dnieper River in order to satisfy the visiting Empress' expectations that the Crimea was a possession worthy of the cost of its conquest. The 'Arab Façade' of self-government for Mesopotamia devised in 1917-1918 served a similar function for British policy planners desiring to satisfy the expectations of the international community, but also their own British and Arab subjects, about the future of the Anglo-Iraqi nation making project. Unlike Catherine II, however, the British and Iraqi press proved increasingly intent on forcing the British government to either suffuse the façade with real popular political power or come clean about its deception and face the consequences of public opprobrium.

Although policy planners had already come to terms with the necessity of erecting some form of self-governing administration in Mesopotamia,¹ the widespread riots in response to the announcement of the Mandate in the summer of 1920, led to the determination that, within the limits of "the safeguarding of our obligations and interests as Mandatory," the Arab Façade would need to be "as completely Arab as possible."² By most historical accounts, this formula did indeed describe the character of the Anglo-Iraqi government, namely that it was as self-governing as it could be up to the point of endangering British interests in protecting the delicate framework of Iraqi political life

¹ Hirtzel to Wilson March 12 1918 in *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers/ADD/52455/C*

² 'Mesopotamia. Appointment of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner: Instructions of His Majesty's Government, September 01 1920. *NA, FO 371/5229/E10758*

from external and, most importantly, internal threats.³ Although British imperial and interimperial interests certainly did define the limits of Iraqi self-government repeatedly and dramatically over the course of the mandate, the significant and sharply focused pressure the popular press in both Britain and Iraq brought to bear on the British government to keep the advancement of self-government in Iraq flush up against those limits has been underappreciated.⁴

In the aftermath of the 1920 rising in Iraq, an ongoing British political and press campaign determined to expose the occupation of Iraq as an anachronistic imperial adventure out of conformity with the principles of the League of Nations and an emerging body of nationalistically minded Iraqi journalists with similar goals in mind seemed to discover one another and the leverage that each other's existence might lend to their localized efforts. Moreover, this discovery occurred in the midst of an Empire-wide, indeed a global, 'national awakening' among subject peoples from Dublin to Delhi that imbued with legitimacy the internationalist and constitutionalist language being used

³ The most significant studies of the mandate period in Iraq are the following. Philip Willard Ireland's *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London: Kegan Paul, 2004) was originally published in 1937 and reflects the impressive knowledge and access to official documents Ireland had from his time spent at the Baghdad Residency in the British service and his close relationship with many of the key actors. Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976) updates Ireland's work with official government documents and other archival materials made available after the 50 year moratorium had elapsed. As such, Sluglett's work offers a broader survey of British inter-departmental relations and their influence on the direction of policy in Iraq. Most recently, Toby Dodge's *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003) makes a careful examination of British perceptions, characteristically erroneous, of Iraqi social, economic, and political life, how those perceptions led to disastrous policy planning, and how the failure of the Anglo-Iraqi nation making project necessitated the introduction of an unprecedentedly insidious, in Dodge's view, form of imperial control through 'the despotic power of the Royal Air Force.'

⁴ Although the role of popular opposition to the mandate in Iraq emanating out of Britain is gestured to in most works on the period, it is almost invariably presented as a monolithic demand for economy from the British taxpayer. Similarly, the opposition of the Iraqi press to British rule in Iraq is usually represented as a blanked opposition to any form of foreign rule occasionally finding articulate expression over one particular issue or another or as the mouthpieces of Iraqi politicians. A significant exception to this tendency is the first chapter of Orit Bashkin's *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) which offers a snapshot of the visions of the Iraqi state held by prominent Iraqi editors garnered from her reading of their daily newspapers.

by the British and Iraqi press to undermine the logic of the occupation. This chapter seeks to illustrate the liberalizing influence these campaigns had on British policy making in Iraq on the one hand and the power to expose the reality of Iraq's essentially colonial status on the other when the limits of British flexibility were repeatedly reached. As British administrators and politicians would learn to their cost, resorting to the suppression of self-government in Iraq in such moments would have lasting consequences for perceptions of the legitimacy of the Anglo-Iraqi nation making project, if not the legitimacy of British imperial democracy itself, in the early years of the interwar period.

In his biography of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson, Acting Civil Commissioner for Mesopotamia from 1915 until Sir Percy Cox returned to fill that role in 1920, John Marlowe aptly described Wilson as, and entitled his book, *Late Victorian*.⁵ Having served in administrations in India, Persia, and Mesopotamia since 1903, Wilson learned his trade from old-guard India men and shared their faith in a Victorian conception of British imperial rule as a necessary force for order and progress in a world characterized by uneven development and inter-imperial competition.⁶ Wilson would describe himself in 1920 as "a rank imperialist whose trade for the last 12 years has been the acquisition of territory and influence in these parts," and he shared the view of his superiors that British rule and expansion was justified by the protection it offered indigenous peoples from Britain's less politically enlightened imperial rivals, as well as their own political

⁵ John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset P, 1967).

⁶ For a discussion of a Victorian approach to empire, see John Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion," *English Historical Review* Vol. 447 (June 1997): pp. 614-642.

immaturity.⁷ It was an irony not lost on Wilson, who would entitle his autobiographical account of his service in Mesopotamia *A Clash of Loyalties*, that his unwavering commitment to Victorian imperial ideals would ultimately spell the end of his otherwise illustrious military career.⁸ Wilson's zeal for the construction of 'New India' in Mesopotamia enjoyed over three years of relatively free reign, however, before it became a serious liability for his government's sudden embrace of internationalism in the spring of 1918.⁹

Like many of his generation and background of imperial service, Wilson understood the value of indirect rule and acknowledged the desire among indigenous peoples for political power as a natural and even a positive sign for a region's development. He also viewed indigenous self-government as the final step in a long process of imperially guided political maturation, however, and considered the notion that any peoples were possessed of an inherent right to self-government a self-indulgent and idealistic fantasy that willfully ignored centuries of field experience to the contrary. Accordingly, Wilson had followed the 'Indian model' in dutifully granting key Mesopotamian notables, educated urban elites, and tribal sheikhs some authority over various sections of the population. As late as 1920, however, Wilson continued to insist that his experience of governing through these local clients had only confirmed the fact

⁷ Wilson to IO, 3 June 1920, *BL, L/PS/10/756*

⁸ Arnold T. Wilson, *A Clash of Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1917-1920, a Personal and Historical Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931).

⁹ For Wilson's account of his efforts, see Arnold T. Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1914-1917, a Personal and Historical Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930) and Arnold T. Wilson, *A Clash of Loyalties: Mesopotamia, 1917-1920, a Personal and Historical Record* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). For an alternative interpretation privileging Iraqi perspectives, see Ghassan R. Atiyyah, *Iraq 1908-1921 A Political Study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973).

that the Arabs of Mesopotamia were not only “unfit to govern themselves,” but “equally unfit for a voice in the forming of the Government” they would receive.¹⁰

In the weeks following Lloyd George’s January 1918 declaration of intent to recognize Mesopotamia’s entitlement to her ‘own separate national condition,’ Arthur Hirtzel, head of the India Office’s political department, informed Wilson of the kind of policy changes he would be expected to implement in Mesopotamia as well as the reasoning for the transition. Hirtzel stressed that Wilson’s understanding of “the real political tendencies [in England] at this stage of the war” was “no less important” than his government’s understanding of “the possibilities and probabilities on the spot” that had thus far guided him. “Entirely different currents are flowing now,” Hirtzel explained, and

we must shape our course to them if we are going to get what we want in Iraq. The old watch-words are obsolete, and the question is how we are to secure what is essential under the new ones. This thing can be done, but a certain re-orientation is necessary.¹¹

“The ‘Arab façade’” in Mesopotamia, Hirtzel warned, “may have to be something rather more solid than we had originally contemplated.”¹²

Wilson’s resistance to this transition has been well documented and is usually attributed to his belief that short-term crises of political interest in London should not be permitted to derail generations of imperial development in the east.¹³ As Philip Ireland has shown, at each step in the transition toward a firmer Arab Façade in Iraq, Wilson expended great effort to reorient his government’s approach to policy in the region

¹⁰ Wilson to India Office, 3 June 1920, *BL, L/PS/10/756*.

¹¹ Hirtzel to Wilson March 12 1918, *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers/ADD/52455/C*.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Timothy Paris, “British Middle East Policy-Making after the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools,” *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (September 1998): 773-793.

around his own goals.¹⁴ He fumed over the dangerous implications for his administration that the promise of self-determination contained in the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 threatened, warning that such language might lead to an Arab State, but “not on the lines desired by H.M.G.” and “by revolution and not by evolution.”¹⁵ When requested in the winter of 1918 to gauge public preference in Mesopotamia for various kinds of government, Wilson returned instead a carefully managed plebiscite reflecting a popular desire for the indefinite continuation of British protection, which he culled from his most important Arab clients.¹⁶

By the fall of 1919, Hirtzel was forced to take a firmer tone with Wilson, if one not altogether unsympathetic to his point of view, offering a clearer vision of the precarious state of opinion on imperial administration as a form of government at home, internationally, and throughout the Empire. Wilson’s ideal of “Mesopotamia as the model of an efficiently administered British dependency or protectorate,” Hirtzel informed him, “is dead.” Not only was it dead in Mesopotamia, Hirtzel lamented, but “the same idea is dead in India and is decomposing in Egypt.” A “new order of ideas” now reigned over British imperial policy making in general, ensuring that “things are going to be contrary to our most cherished hopes.” Hirtzel agreed with Wilson’s attitude that “we must do what we can to put on the brake, and save all we can out of the wreck.”¹⁷ He assured him, however, that even this would require far more adaptability of methods and ideas toward accommodating Arab nationalist aspirations than Wilson had shown.

¹⁴ Ireland, pp. 176-200.

¹⁵ Wilson to Percy Cox, June 29, 1920 in *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD/52455/A*

¹⁶ Memorandum by Young 18 July 1920 in *NA, FO/371/5228*. On the plebiscite, also see Paris, “Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools,” pp. 778 and Ireland, pp. 166-175.

¹⁷ Hirtzel to Wilson, July 19 1919, *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C*.

You are going to have an Arab State whether you like it or not, whether Mesopotamia wants it or not... you appear to be trying, impossibly, to stem the tide instead of guide it into the channel that would suit you best. When we get our mandate these *disjectia membra* will have to be co-ordinated into something organic... you are also going to have a lot of people in Mesopotamia whose heads will be full of absurd ideas from Syria and heaven knows where... and a use must be found for them... Otherwise we shall have another Egypt on our hands¹⁸

Hirtzel would continue his attempt's to 'reform' the intransigent Wilson toward "swimming with the new tide" in British political perspectives toward imperial adventures, "which is set towards the education and not the government of what used to be subject peoples."¹⁹ In emphasizing the fact that Arab self-government was 'not an administrative question but a political question,'²⁰ Hirtzel informed Wilson in early 1920 that the Lloyd George administration was facing immanent collapse, that it would "almost certainly be succeeded by a Labour Gov.t, who will hold very different views on imperial and financial questions," that "the politico-industrial situation in this country" was verging on a Bolshevik style revolution. As a result, Hirtzel speculated, "it is quite in the cards that there will be a demand for withdrawal" from Mesopotamia.²¹ What was wanted with the direst necessity, Hirtzel stated, was

some modicum of Arab institutions which we can safely leave while pulling the strings ourselves: something which won't cost very much, which Labour can swallow consistently with its principles, but under which our influence and economic and political interests will be secure. Therefore it is a time for cutting down all ambitions and for reducing all responsibilities within the narrowest limits.²²

Wilson was unequivocal in his replies to such enjoinders.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Hirtzel to Wilson September 17 1919, *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C.*

²⁰ Paris, p. 782.

²¹ Hirtzel to Wilson February 03 1920, *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C.*

²² *Ibid.*

Apart from being ‘wholly unjustifiable interferences’ in his administration,²³ Wilson complained in April 1920, permitting London politics to degrade the character of his administration in Mesopotamia had led to an approach to imperial governance that, in his view, “has neither honour, prospects, permanence, nor hopes of successful accomplishment.”²⁴ The principles undergirding Article 22 of the League of Nations that seemed to be guiding the transition away from ‘responsible government,’ he argued to Hirtzel in the same month, were “based upon a fallacy” and written without an understanding of their “practical effects” they would surely have on the ground.²⁵ It was for this reason, he informed Montague, that

when I get orders and am satisfied that they are issued after consideration of all relevant facts, I obey them... [but] facts must be faced at both ends. My sole object is to prevent H.M.G. from embarking without full knowledge upon a course which I believe must precipitate a situation which will involve unexampled disaster here and in Persia and may not end there.²⁶

Accordingly, when Wilson was alerted to the impending announcement of the allocation of the mandates at San Remo in April 1920, he preempted it with his own announcement in which he eliminated any reference to representative indigenous institutions being considered. Similarly, in June, Wilson delayed the announcement of the government’s intention to establish an Arab Council of State under an Arab presidency and to promulgate a constitution in consultation with native representatives. When he did publish the announcement weeks later, Wilson eliminated all references to the Council or constitutional committee as being representative or in consultation with the Iraqi people.²⁷ Finally, when confronted that June with the demand for Iraqi independence from a

²³ Wilson to Cox January 02 1920, *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 A*.

²⁴ Wilson to Montagu April 10 1920, *BL Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C*.

²⁵ Wilson to Hirtzel April 15 1920, *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C*.

²⁶ Wilson to Montagu April 10 1920, *BL Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C*.

²⁷ Paris, pp. 780-782.

delegation of fifteen representatives of numerous Iraqi societies organized in opposition to what they viewed as a veiled form of British colonization, Wilson addressed them as a “malcontent clique and dismissed their demands as impractical and premature.”²⁸ Within a few days of this rebuff, anti-mandate protests had developed into riots along the Euphrates. Within a fortnight, the conflagration would grow beyond the control of British forces to contain.

The causes of the 1920 rising in Mesopotamia have been debated by historians. Most agree, however, that some combination of tribal frustration with the disruption of regional power relations privileging the Iraqi urban elite,²⁹ the fear among Shi’a *ulema* of being subjugated to the authority of either the Sunni minority or non-Muslim Europeans,³⁰ and a widespread despair at the collapse of Iraqi services, trade relations, and the standard of living³¹ under the occupation permitted a multiplicity of grievances to coalesce into a general rising.³² Wilson’s explanation for the origins of the rising, in both his dispatches and his book, has been criticized for its privileging of Pan-Arab nationalist propaganda emanating out of Syria as the primary force driving what would have otherwise been disconnected and even oppositional grievances into a single organized movement reflecting something approaching Iraqi national identity, the existence of which he would have resoundingly denied. By his own account, however, Wilson seems also to have been concerned with the popular perception of the British Empire as having

²⁸ Amal Vinogradov, “The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1972), p. 135.

²⁹ For this view, see James Aylmer Lowthorpe Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920*, (Edinburgh and London, W. Blackwood and Sons, 1922).

³⁰ Vinogradov attributes the pervasiveness of this view to Elie Kedouri’s ‘Reflexions sur l’histoire du Royaume d’Iraq (1921-1958)’, *Orient*, No. 11 (1959) pp. 55-79. Vinogradov, p. 124.

³¹ This is the view of the rising taken by Ghassan R Atiyyah in *Iraq 1908-1921 A Political Study* (Beirut: The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1973).

³² For an historiographical overview of interpretations in English and Arabic, see Vinogradov.

been weakened by the war and, therefore, unable to defend its interests against international opprobrium, anti-colonial nationalism, and even the discontent of the British people.

As early as the spring of 1919, Wilson had begun to warn the India Office that key Iraqi members of Faysal's Arab government in Damascus, such as future Iraqi Prime Ministers, Ja'far al Askari and Nuri al Said, had been "conducting active secret propaganda... with a strong anti-foreign bias" through networks of friends and family in anticipation of their return to Iraq to establish "an Arab Government on the lines of what they hope to have in Syria." Already, Wilson pointed out, his carefully cultivated network of pro-British Iraqi clients were viewing British tolerance of this as tacit support for the Pan-Arab union of Syria and Iraq such propaganda popularized and demanding Wilson's assurance that their aspirations to power under a British administration would not be usurped by such upstarts.³³ Wilson's inability to give the pro-British element in Iraq his assurance that "Sheikh Feisal and his adherents are to have no part in Mesopotamian politics and that we forbid their coming here,"³⁴ despite his efforts to obstruct such propaganda, called Wilson's intention or even ability to make good on the power-sharing arrangements he had been negotiating with them.³⁵ Wilson's suspicions that officials in London valued the appearance of Faysal's cooperation more highly than the practical relationships he had been building on the ground seem to be born out in Foreign Office minutes criticizing Wilson's 'dubious attitude' toward Lloyd George's

³³ Wilson to Montagu May 21, 1919, *BL, L/PS/11/140/P4937/1919*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ For discussions of a Sherifian vision of Iraq and the relationship between Sherifian ideas about Syria and Iraq, see Ofra Bengio "Faysal's Vision of Iraq: A Retrospect," in Asher Susser and Aryeh Shmuelevitz, eds., *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World: Essays in Honour of the late Professor Uriel Dann* (London: Frank Cass, 1995).

pro-Sherifian policy and arguing that preventing Mesopotamian members of Faysal's regime from returning home would merely "exacerbate their already none too pro-British tempers." Better, it was reasoned, to allow "Faysal and other Arab propagandists... to ventilate their views up to the point at which such ventilation becomes dangerous to the maintenance of order. This point does not appear to have been reached."³⁶

Wilson and his Political Officers stationed throughout Mesopotamia were particularly sensitive to the internationalist language beginning to appear in propaganda reflecting a far more anti-colonialist than Iraqi or even Arab nationalist tone. By early 1920, British police reports were warning that "the advance of the Bolsheviks" and the impact it had had on international relations were among "the chief topics of conversation" in the coffee houses.³⁷ Even more worrisome was the representation of the Bolsheviks as the chief opponents of the "savage wolves of Europe" in their quest to colonize all of Asia and "British imperialism" in particular as committed to "keeping Asiatic nations in a state of eternal thralldom." The promises of American President Woodrow Wilson, it was argued, had been "violated in the most shameless and flagrant manner" by Britain and France at the peace, "dishonouring the American President" and resulting in the denial of independence to all Muslim states.³⁸ Mustafa Kemal's success in pushing British and French forces out of Turkey seemed to confirm for pro- and anti-British elements alike that the British Empire was hanging on to its possessions by a thread. "Bolshevism and rebellion," one Political Officer reported in April 1920, "are the topics of conversation everywhere; and 'Pan-Arab' is gradually merging into 'pro-

³⁶ Minute by Garbett October 18, 1919 *BL/L/PS/11/159/6982T9*.

³⁷ Mesopotamia Police Reports for 1920. *BL, L/PS/10 vol. 2 no. 5* p. 143

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 126. For a discussion of regional views of Woodrow Wilson's vision for postwar internationalism, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Turk.’,” threatening to explode into “open demonstration if not actually open revolt in the near future.”³⁹

The announcement of Britain’s intention to accept a Mandate for Mesopotamia in April 1920, according to police reports, considerably stirred the “Pan-Arab Class” in Iraq who interpreted it as “an indication of the pressure that must have been brought to bear on Britain to necessitate such a declaration” when either independence or a British protectorate was expected.⁴⁰ A few days after the announcement, Political Officers noted that a “general gloom seemed to have settled over the ‘political world’” among pro- and anti-British elements alike. From Pan-Arab corners, it was reported, overheard conversations about the formation of a “FIDA-IYYIN society (in which men offer to die for the cause)” were being considered as well as nationalist societies whose “duty would be to rid the country of certain officials-British and Arab-who stand in the way of Independence.”⁴¹

Examples of the collapsing relationship between British officers and the tribes began to appear around the same time. As one Political Officer reported that May, “in reply to the request for the return of stolen property,” local headmen of the Jaghaifa tribe sent a signed letter “addressed to the British people” that was most disturbing in its attention to the contradictory nature of Britain’s policy in Mesopotamia with internationalist principles as a justification for disobedience.⁴²

The letter is obviously the work of an educated Iraqi and it quotes Wilson, Lloyd George, Lord Grey, and other persons who are quite beyond the ken of the signatories. He states that General Maud promised on entering Baghdad that Mesopotamia would be for the Arabs. The same promise had been repeated by

³⁹ Mesopotamia Police Reports for 1920, *BL, L/PS/10 vol. 2 no. 14*

⁴⁰ Mesopotamia Police Reports for 1920, *BL, L/PS/10 vol. 2 no. 15*

⁴¹ Mesopotamia Police Reports for 1920, *BL, L/PS/10 vol. 2 no. 16*

⁴² For a discussion of tribal perceptions of Anglo-Iraqi relations before 1920 see Atiyah, pp. 71-79.

various Politicians at various times. We are today in the 20th Century and you cannot treat us like sheep as you do the Egyptians and Indians. The Iraqi are you say unchanged and savages and cannot manage themselves, it is we Iraqi who are the brains of the Arab nation and who freed Syria. Why do you give Armenia independence, is it because they are of your own religion? Two members who spoke on behalf of the Muslims at the Peace Conference were English! You are given a short time to clear out of Mesopotamia if you don't go you will be driven out. He who takes the sword will not yield to words!⁴³

When such sentiments began to find more violent expression that June, Wilson placed the blame squarely on the British government, but also on the British people. In a stormy telegram to Hirtzel, Wilson argued that it was criticisms of the occupation in the British Parliament and press that had convinced Iraq's more extreme nationalists "that we are not prepared to stay here against popular will, from which it follows that if popular sentiment is adequately excited against us we shall in practice withdraw, Article 22 notwithstanding." Despite every effort by Wilson to ensure, as per his instructions from the beginning of his tenure in Mesopotamia, that "we should in practice exercise a considerable degree of effective control over the destinies of the country," he had been undermined by his own superiors' repeated and contradictory declarations to the Arabs of Mesopotamia and the people of Britain that they intended to "impose no particular institution upon the country, except such as the people should adopt of their own free will." As a result, the government had instilled a sense of entitlement to self-rule in a people who, by Wilson's account, "had for 200 years been autocratically governed... few of whose leaders could read and write, and practically none of whom could speak a foreign language, had ever travelled further than Constantinople, or had ever held high Offices in any Government." In other words, a people Wilson had every reason to believe

⁴³ Telegram from 51st Brigade to Civil Com of Baghdad May 14 1920. *BL, L/PS/11/174/P4819/1920*

could have been brought into an effective British administration if he had been permitted to complete its construction. Moreover, Wilson argued, the government's failure to heed his warnings had all but confirmed suspicions of Britain's imperial weakness as "extremists at Baghdad [were being] encouraged by our lack of success on the Euphrates... and are endeavouring by their activities so to influence public opinion against us, as to create a sentiment hostile to us in districts at present orderly."⁴⁴

The 1920 rising in Mesopotamia could not have come at a more opportune moment for dissenting leaders then endeavoring to maneuver British Labour into the Liberal Party's position of foremost opposition to the Conservative Party in Parliament. That January, the victory of ILP member Tom Myers as a Labour candidate in the traditional Liberal stronghold of Spen Valley would not only herald the beginning of Labour's usurpation of the Liberal Party, but, as one historian put it, the beginning of modern British politics.⁴⁵ Viewing the ILP's success in the context of current political events, the *Daily Herald* declared the victory as the "Triumphant Vindication of the Independent Labour Party's Policy in War and Peace."⁴⁶ For just as they had done during the war and over the course of the peace settlement, dissenting propagandists had kept the British government's lack of conformity with internationalist principles at the forefront of their political propaganda.

⁴⁴ Wilson to Hirtzel, June 10 1920. *BL, Sir Arnold Wilson Papers ADD 52455 C*

⁴⁵ Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924: The Beginning of Modern British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ *Labour Leader*, January 08 1920.

In the months leading up to the Spen Valley by-election, UDC and ILP writers had focused on Lloyd George's support of the Greek occupation of Smyrna in the summer of 1919 as the most recent evidence that the *quid pro quo* of territory for wartime alliances defined by the Secret Treaties of 1915-1916 continued to govern the Allied approach to the postwar settlement. In addition to reflecting, "a sickening mixture of religious fanaticism and capitalistic greed," as H.N. Brailsford put it in the *Daily Herald* in April 1920, Lloyd George's support for the Greek incursion into Turkish territory was nothing short of the "unblushing imperialism" that had characterized the British government's "predatory policy" in the region generally since the war's end. This newest addition to the "crazy patchwork of little States" being created in the former Ottoman territories by the Allied Powers, Brailsford argued, cared not at all for the untold suffering it brought to the indigenous inhabitants involved, for the exasperation of Anglo-Muslim relations already at the breaking over the Kaliphate Question, or the incitement of fresh wars it portended, not only with Turkey, but with Britain's own imperial subjects. Rather, the sole concern of the Lloyd George administration was British control of oil reserves, railway concessions, and air routes throughout Western Asia that had driven British policy in the east since the outbreak of the war.⁴⁷ Philip Snowden concurred in the *Labour Leader*, predicting that the "impudent manner" in which "Great Britain has stolen the rich old lands of Asia Minor" and permitted her Greek and French allies to share in "the proceeds of the exploitation" would leave every state and people in the region "grievously disaffected" and looking for "the first opportunity, by resort to arms, to defeat its purpose."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Daily Herald* April 10, 1920.

⁴⁸ *Labour Leader* May 13 1920.

As information about Mesopotamian oil became more widely known in the spring of 1920 the subject of oil became more prominent in Labour propaganda. In March, the ILP's weekly pamphlet for public speakers identified Lloyd George's public befuddlement at withdrawing from a region possessed of such "great possibilities" as Mesopotamia's "rich oil deposits,"⁴⁹ as "the first definite confession by Lloyd George that peace settlements for the Turkish Empire will be governed by considerations of oil." Speakers were also given the estimated cost of the opening year of the occupation, listed at 18,572 British troops, 51,428 Indian troops, and £19 million pounds sterling, all spent "to enable some private company to secure oil," according to ILP writers.⁵⁰

The announcement of the agreement between the British government and the Royal Dutch Shell Company over oil production in Mesopotamia on May 7 caused the *Times* to question Lloyd George's faith that the Mesopotamia mandate would pay for itself after all, in light of the fact that Dutch Shell was based in the Netherlands and that, presumably, the lion's share of the profits would go to Holland.⁵¹ The agreement only emphasized, for Brailsford, the fact that "that the main objectives of both sides" in the Great War had always been "the coal-fields and the oil-wells, the trade routes, and the ruin of competitors." If, in fact, the British government cared a jot for the principle of nationality, Brailsford continued, "if we are 'trustees' for the people of Mesopotamia it follows that the profits won from the oil belong to it and not to us." Moreover, he reasoned, "every argument for the nationalization of coal in this country tells at least as strongly for the nationalization of oil in Mesopotamia." It was the duty of the Labour movement, he insisted, to "boldly advocate the Socialist solution" universally and to

⁴⁹ For the original speech, see *Times of London* March 26 1920.

⁵⁰ I.L.P. Weekly Notes for Speakers, No. 50. April 1st, 1920. *PHM*, JM1129 ILP.

⁵¹ *Times of London*, May 07 1920.

declare that, just as British coal belongs to the British people and not some corporate conglomerate, “the natural wealth of Mesopotamia belongs to its inhabitants” as well.⁵²

Labour propagandists like Fenner Brockway left no doubt of their awareness that “Oil” promised to rival coal in its importance to industry, transport, and war, and “was already becoming to this century what steam was to the last” in terms of fueling the engines of progress.⁵³ Like so many natural resources before it, however, oil was also the new engine of inter-imperial competition and war. For Brockway in particular, the parallel of Britain’s alignment of French and Dutch oil groups “within the scope of the British concern” to the exclusion of American oil interests with the Triple Entente’s pre-war attempts to exclude German ambitions from all points East was “too close not to be noted as a warning.”⁵⁴ Snowden less subtly presented the crisis between the United States and Mexico over control over Mexican oil and, indeed, the Anglo-American tensions being created by Britain’s attempts to monopolize Mesopotamian oil as evidence that “oil is going to be the bone of international contention, and for the control of this commodity wars are going to be fought, and the peoples of different countries bidden to hate and kill each other.”⁵⁵ No doubt, Snowden speculated in early June, reports of widespread restlessness in Mesopotamia were early indications that Britain’s intentions to secure control of “the richest deposits of oil in the world” in the northern provinces of Mesopotamia were beginning to conflict with regional ambitions for self-government.⁵⁶

In articulating the official view of the Labour Party on the progress of the League of

⁵² *Daily Herald*, May 12 1920.

⁵³ Fenner A. Brockway, *How to End War* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1920), p. 7. *LSE, ILP/5/1920/7*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Labour Leader*, May 27 1920.

⁵⁶ *Labour Leader*, June 17 1920.

Nations in May 1920, the Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions (LPACIQ) offered a survey of undeveloped regions around the world to illustrate the bankruptcy of League principles in the face of imperial interests.⁵⁷ Although the LPACIQ report addressed Cyprus, Dodecanese, Smyrna, Thrace, Egypt and Armenia, its writers reserved “special censure” for the latter two. The determination to impose a mandate on Mesopotamia stood in stark contrast to the treatment of “the Armenians, the one people in the Middle East who had consistently and urgently asked for the good offices of a mandatory power.” Not only were the Armenians “not placed under a mandate, the three Allied Powers virtually washed their hands of them and left them to their fate.” In Egypt, by contrast, “where the unanimous demand for independence [is heard] among every class and denomination,” the popular will was baldly “violated by the imposition of a British protectorate and practical incorporation of Egypt into the British Empire,” despite the political maturity of the Egyptian state. The mandates themselves which, the LPACIQ suggested, “might have marked a turning point in the relations between Western and Oriental peoples,” had been “reduced to a mockery” by their complete disregard for the wishes of the peoples they were designed to assist as well as the wishes of the people who would be responsible for their assistance. For, despite the enormous cost of the Mesopotamia mandate to the British people, Lloyd George had undertaken its procurement “without consultation through constitutional and democratic channels,” Parliamentary or otherwise. The specter of oil only laid bare the “exploitation and monopolization in interests of the mandatory at the expense of the mandate” already

⁵⁷ The Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions Summary of Attached Memorandum on the Turkish Treaty, Memo no. 141a, May 17 1920. *PHM LPACIQ Memos*.

underway.⁵⁸

Although Labour activists were certainly the earliest and most articulate opponents to Lloyd George's approach to the mandate in Mesopotamia, they were not alone. Somewhat ironically, it was Asquith, the Prime Minister responsible for the invasion of Mesopotamia in the first place, who took up the charge to limit British responsibilities in the region to an absolute minimum as a matter of fiscal responsibility as early as March 1920.⁵⁹ The *Times* occasionally chimed in through its coverage of the increasingly public challenges by Asquith and his supporters to the mandate, paying particular attention to the "huge expenditure," the government's tendency to operate "without obtaining the sanction of Parliament, or even of going through the pretense of seeking Parliamentary approval," and, more rarely, its inability "to perceive [any] recognition of the principles which guided the framers of the Covenant when they devised the Mandatory system."⁶⁰ On June 23, however, the national movement to immediately draw down British forces in Mesopotamia got underway in earnest as MPs from every party discovered in their morning papers that Lloyd George had accepted the mandate for Mesopotamia and that plans to erect a provisional government there had already been announced in Baghdad the morning before.⁶¹

At the Parliamentary debate later that day, Asquith condemned Lloyd George's circumvention of the Parliament and reiterated his support for a policy of withdrawal to Basra.⁶² He pointed out the fact that in the army estimates presented to the Parliament that day, there was "no trace... of a penny to be expended in the civil administration of

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

⁵⁹ See, for example, *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 25 March 1920 vol. 127 cc. 645

⁶⁰ *Times of London*, June 01 1920, see also May 30, June 14, 15, 21, and 24, 1920.

⁶¹ *Times of London*, June 24 1920.

⁶² *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 23 June 1920 vol 130 cc2230

the whole of Mesopotamia,”⁶³ meaning either that Lloyd George was attempting to falsely minimize reports of actual expenditure,⁶⁴ or that his lack of concern for actually developing the region had placed Great Britain in “fundamental violation of the principles upon which we entered into... the League of Nations.”⁶⁵ It was plain in any event, Asquith argued, that Lloyd George’s primary concern was to snatch up of the potential wealth of Mesopotamia before it was lost to another power, along with his own political skin.⁶⁶ The only “statesmanlike settlement” to the “thorny problem” of Mesopotamia, Asquith argued, also had the advantage of being the cheapest and the one most likely to permit “a clear conscience in regard to the mandatory of the League of Nations.” Being namely, to accept a mandate only for the regions desirous of it and only if specifically requested by the League of Nations to do so and to turn over authority in what remained to a fully indigenous administration as soon as possible.⁶⁷

Lloyd George’s reply that it was Asquith himself who had left his government with the *fait accompli* of a British occupied Mesopotamia they could neither annex nor abandon and that including her petroliferous regions in the mandate was not only good policy, but an obligation to Arabs and Britons alike only confirmed for his Labour critics the persistence of imperial principles across British governments.⁶⁸ Although the *Daily Herald* was forced to admit that Lloyd George “wiped the floor” with Asquith in the debate,⁶⁹ he nevertheless failed to answer the criticisms of Labour MPs that five years of imperial rule through martial law had already poisoned the well for good Anglo-Arab

⁶³ *Ibid.* cc. 2235-6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* cc. 2231-2

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* cc. 2235-6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* cc. 2235-6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* cc. 2237.

⁶⁸ *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 23 June 1920 vol 130 cc. 2255

⁶⁹ *Daily Herald*, June 24 1920.

relations and that his seeming disinterest in erecting self-governing institutions in the near future repudiated not only the principles of the League, but the very ideals for which the British people had fought the war.⁷⁰ Readers had only to consider Egypt or Ireland, the *Daily Herald* suggested, to see the irrelevance of political maturity to the British government's willingness to release territory from its grip.⁷¹ As *Foreign Affairs*, the UDC's new monthly political magazine, saw it, Britain's allocation of the Mesopotamian mandate to itself meant merely that "Curzon's old dictum that the western boundary of India was the Euphrates [had] been exceeded by the facts. It is today the Mediterranean... insatiable, indeed, is the lust of Empire among the ruling classes of Britain."⁷² It was with these ideas fresh in mind that the Parliamentary Labour Party renewed its commitment to the application of the principles undergirding the crumbling mandate idea not only in Mesopotamia but in the British possessions of India, Egypt, and Ireland as well at its annual conference on June 24.⁷³

In an important sense, Labour had been linking its own political destiny to that of India, Egypt, Ireland, and Mesopotamia since the end of the war. In January 1920, for example, the *Labour Leader* published an expose on "ominous signs of trouble which are gathering among what are termed 'subject races' under British rule" specifically in Ireland, India, Egypt, and Mesopotamia entitled "Harvesting Hate: The Madness of the Rulers of the British Empire." Not only had the expectations of independence raised by the internationalist nature of the peace been dashed, the writer argued, but when feelings of disappointment naturally found expression in public protest and strikes, the Lloyd

⁷⁰ *Daily Herald*, June 24 1920.

⁷¹ *Daily Herald*, June 24 1920.

⁷² *Foreign Affairs*, June 1920.

⁷³ *Daily Herald*, June 25 1920.

George administration turned to brute force to contain them, “creating against England a volume of hatred unparalleled in history calculated to bring down the British Empire in blood and shame” in the process. The *Labour Leader* enjoined its readers to support the Labour movement in its aim to bring a final end to “this worn-out dream of military Empire by a complete overthrow of the present Government” before the backlash brought more war to their doorsteps.⁷⁴ As news of the risings in Mesopotamia began to trickle into Britain in early July, the *Labour Leader* cautioned its readers against viewing the disturbances as isolated from similar events throughout the Empire. “From Ireland to Mesopotamia,” the authors declared, “is a long way geographically, but not politically. They are both captives of imperialism.” It was the policy of the Labour Party to clear out of both.⁷⁵ When Winston Churchill confirmed in Parliament on July 16 that all communications between Basra and Baghdad had been cut for nearly a week and that British forces, utterly overwhelmed at that point, were unable to remedy the situation, the *Daily Herald* could justifiably lament that “the role of Cassandra is notoriously a thankless one. And it is no consolation at all to be able to turn and say, ‘I told you so’.”⁷⁶

With the rising underway in earnest by mid-July, Labour publications took great liberties in projecting the Labour movement’s criticisms of imperial democracy onto the insurgents themselves. Unlike the British public, the *Daily Herald* argued, the Arabs of Mesopotamia were “not able to read the speeches of our statesmen... to understand about mandates and about making Asia safe for democracy... or comprehend that (in Lord Curzon’s ringing phrase) we are knights-errant of civilization.” Speaking for the Arab insurgents directly, the *Daily Herald* described their view from Mesopotamia.

They see their rising national consciousness affronted. They see before them—

⁷⁴ *Labour Leader*, January 29 1920.

⁷⁵ *Labour Leader*, July 01 1920.

⁷⁶ *Daily Herald*, July 19 1920.

with Egypt as a warning—a vista of government by tank and airplane. They see Western Industrialism and Western Militarism threatening their old civilization. And they have not the least intention of submitting easily to these things at the bidding of the Big Three, or on the assurance of the European Liberals that it is all for their own good. They propose—strange as it may seem to the speechmakers of 1914—to fight for their independence against the attempts of the Allies at world domination.⁷⁷

On July 23, T. E. Lawrence offered a more objective, or, at the very least, popularly authoritative perspective of the ‘Arab mind’ on the rising in a letter to the *Times*. The Arabs, he assured the *Times*, “did not risk their lives in battle to change masters... but to win a show of their own.” In two years of British administration, Lawrence illustrated, the government remained “English in fashion... conducted in the English language... has 450 British executive officers... and not a single responsible Mesopotamian.” The tens of thousands of British troops in Mesopotamia, he pointed out, “are occupied... not in guarding the frontiers. They are holding down the people.” The most surprising aspect of the revolt, Lawrence exclaimed, was the fact that the British were so surprised by its outbreak.⁷⁸

Lawrence’s arguments resonated with Labour writers for his emphasis on “the iniquities and loss involved in the attempt to impose a rule on those people which is... alien to their wishes... [and] distinctly contrary to everything our Government pledged” both to the Arabs and the British people. Referring to Mesopotamia as “The Ireland of the East,” the *Daily Herald* insisted that Lawrence’s arguments were “true of others besides the Arabs. Those Indians and Irishmen who fought against Germany did so in order to gain a fuller measure of freedom for themselves. When will the British people grow tired of the lying chicanery of Governments, and insist that Britain's word shall be her bond? That is the question Colonel Lawrence asks us all.”⁷⁹ In addition to paralleling

⁷⁷ *Daily Herald*, July 19 1920.

⁷⁸ *Times of London*, July 23 1920.

⁷⁹ *Daily Herald*, July 24 1920.

the Irish revolution, for the *Labour Leader* the situation in Mesopotamia was also “a parallel to the South African War,” which

was waged for the purpose of securing the goldfields for a gang of cosmopolitan capitalists, and the British taxpayer is being bled and British lives are being sacrificed for this war in Mesopotamia solely in the interests of the syndicates interested in the development of the oil deposits. The political control of the country and the subjugation of the native population is considered to be necessary to secure the exploitation by foreign capitalists of the natural resources of the country.⁸⁰

“Why,” asked the *Labour Leader*, “do Great Britain and France force their unwelcome presence on these peoples?” It was safe to assume that “killing Arabs in the Near East is not [being done] for the good of the people,” the authors answered, “but to get access to, and control of, the natural resources of these countries.”⁸¹ With the very same flames of anti-colonial resistance already alight in Egypt and India, the rising in Mesopotamia seemed to herald an ‘eastern awakening’ that presented the British people with the two alternatives, according to the *Daily Herald* of “raising... subject peoples... to the status of partners, and transforming the Empire into a United Commonwealth” or “settling down to the task of subjugating them by force... in an unending war... that will drain away the power of England and France, as it drained the power of Macedon and Rome.”⁸² When the French mandate collapsed into violence at the end of July, the *Daily Herald* announced that the Allied ‘Holy War in the East’ was indeed igniting the collective “awakening” of the entire Asian continent in the face of recalcitrant European imperialism. “The War to end War,” the authors declared, “has ended in a Peace to end Peace!”

Nearly a dozen wars are now in progress in various parts of the world... Great Britain is directly concerned in half-of-them and indirectly with the rest. We are

⁸⁰ *Labour Leader*, August 08 1920.

⁸¹ *Labour Leader*, July 29 1920.

⁸² *Daily Herald*, July 19 1920.

employing nearly 100,000 troops, British and Indian, at a cost of £50,000,000 a year to crush the Arabs in Mesopotamia, whom we are supposed to have 'liberated' and given 'self-determination'... 30,000... British troops... are being used to crush the last remnants of the Turkish nation... 23,000 more British troops in Palestine... 15,000, or more, are being used to 'protect' Persia... 32,000... are holding the people of Egypt in subjection. Repression and massacres have necessitated large increases in British garrison in India. And in Ireland 50,000 British troops are vainly attempting the task of crushing the national spirit of the people. THE TAXPAYER HAS TO PAY for this policy of grab and greed, tyranny and repression, which is being carried on all over the world in the interests of international financiers, capitalists, and exploiters of the people.⁸³

"If the taxpayer continues to pay without protest," the writers argued, linking the fate of the British working class to such struggles, "he will soon be asked to fight. For the wars are spreading. And after that he will be told to fight-in other words, Conscription." The "eastern awakening," in other words, necessitated a parallel awakening among the British working classes who must "wake up before it is too late and STOP THE WARS!"⁸⁴

As one historian put it, the 1920 rising "fell like a bombshell upon Whitehall" and, "amidst increasing demands for evacuation and... a background of war weariness and reluctance to accept further commitments in Iraq," inspired a scramble to "reassess their policies" to determine the causes and solutions to "what they regarded as a sudden and inexplicable outbreak."⁸⁵ In addition to over 400 British lives and nearly 2,000 wounded, missing, or imprisoned, the rising would cost the exchequer over £40,000,000, or twice the annual budget allotted for Mesopotamia.⁸⁶ Philip Ireland has argued that there is no evidence to suggest that the rising immediately forced a wider measure of self-government in the region and that, in fact, the disruption of order in its wake actually diminished the degree of Arab participation in the government anticipated by policy

⁸³ *Daily Herald*, July 30 and 31, 1920.

⁸⁴ *Daily Herald*, July 30 and 31, 1920.

⁸⁵ Atiyyah, p. 355.

⁸⁶ Vinogradov, p. 138.

planners in the spring of 1920.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the accelerated transition from years of exclusion from A.T. Wilson's centralized rule to an Arab staffed Council of State within a few months of the end of the rising that October would have seemed a stark one for Mesopotamian Arabs.⁸⁸ It also seemed to speak directly to the characterization of the rising as a legitimate and even victorious anti-colonial nationalist movement for which, according to the Arab press, Mesopotamian Arabs had sacrificed over 8,500 martyrs.

The man appointed to the task of stabilizing Anglo-Arab relations in Mesopotamia and getting an ostensibly indigenous government up and running as quickly and as cheaply as possible in Mesopotamia was its first Civil Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox. According to Ireland, Cox had built a reputation in the region as Chief Political Officer during the war and immediately after as a man of "dignity, wisdom and equitable dealing."⁸⁹ As Cox's instructions reflect an awareness, however, the time in which an administrator along the lines begun by Wilson would be accepted in Mesopotamia, had passed, regardless of how respected its High Commissioner might have been,. Among Cox's foremost responsibilities before stepping foot in Mesopotamia was to make contact with the recently deposed King of Syria, Faysal bin Husayn and ascertain whether he was, as the India Office believed, "prepared in principle to accept Great Britain as Mandatory Power and to agree to a form of Mandate on the lines already drafted for communication to the League of Nations." Assuming such a confirmation could be made, Cox was instructed to journey to Baghdad and ascertain whether "a spontaneous

⁸⁷ Ireland, p. 275.

⁸⁸ In contrast to Ireland's view, G. H. Bennet's inter-departmental study of British foreign policy argues that the 1920 rising changed long-term thinking about policy in the Middle East "beyond recognition. G. H. Bennet, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period, 1919-1924* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), p. 106.

⁸⁹ Ireland, pp. 275.

demand for Feisal is forthcoming from a sufficiently representative body of public opinion in Mesopotamia.” If so, Cox was expected to begin negotiations with Faysal to establish the basis on which “working relations between himself and His Majesty's Government” could be established. Meanwhile, Cox was to begin the process of erecting a provisional government from Baghdad that was to be “as completely Arab as possible... subject to the safeguarding of our obligations and interests as Mandatory.” The form of government, referred to as the ‘Arab Façade,’ was meant to be composed of “Arab Ministers for each Department of State, responsible to the Arab Ruler” but with “a British expert Secretary” attached to each. The challenge Cox faced was to ensure that a sufficient degree of authority remained in the hands of himself and his staff as a kind of shadow government, while the façade of Arab rule was presented as being not only as complete, but as constitutionally legitimate and fully representative as possible in the eyes of Mesopotamian Arabs.⁹⁰

When Cox arrived in Mesopotamia on October 1, much of the country was still in active rebellion. Building upon his credentials as an advocate of both top down authority, which appealed to the urban elite and tribal sheikhs, and Arab aspirations for self-rule, which had more widespread popular appeal, Cox toured the country to gather the perspectives of regional leaders on how best to institute the new regime and give his administration a more representative feel.⁹¹ On returning to Baghdad in mid-October, Cox drew up a list of candidates he deemed acceptable, comprised in the main of urban notables, for the various ministries and formally asked Sayid ‘Abdur Rahman al-Gailani, the venerable Naqib of Baghdad, to invite those candidates to accept appointment and to

⁹⁰ ‘Mesopotamia. Appointment of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner: Instructions of His Majesty’s Government, September 01 1920. NA, FO 371/5229/E10758

⁹¹ Ireland, pp. 278-9.

serve as head of the provisional government they would comprise.⁹² With his ministers and head of state in place, having met and agreed upon the roles they would play in relation to their British advisors on November 10th, Cox announced the next day in Baghdad that a General Elective Assembly would be called for the purpose of erecting a Council of State and that the drafting of an organic law for Mesopotamia would be their foremost responsibility.⁹³ Although some of the Baghdadi notables did refuse appointment in the provisional government, the allure of position and power and the promise of an independent state in the long run drew many into cooperation with the Baghdad Residency.

By early November, British forces had taken the offensive throughout the country, inducing most of the tribal leaders involved in the insurgency to begin standing down and appealing for clemency. Dismissing the demands of the Shi'a *ulema* that all negotiations go through them, Cox appealed directly to the tribal leaders with the promise of a general amnesty and the return of their kinsmen either imprisoned or deported over the course of the rising.⁹⁴ Cox also appealed, on behalf of the provisional government, to repatriate several hundred Sherifian officers from French occupied Syria as a means of legitimating the provisional government to the minds of Mesopotamian Arabs politicized by Sherifian propaganda before and during the rising as well as to pave the way for Faysal's impending arrival and assumption of the Amirate.⁹⁵

Determined to maintain the appearance of an open and representative political culture, Cox repealed the tight censorship over the vernacular press imposed under

⁹² For a discussion of the formation of the Council of State with detailed descriptions of each member, see `Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah Al-`Iraqiyah* ([S.l.: s.n.], Matba`at al-`Irfan), 1971), pp. 5-51.

⁹³ For the formation of the Council of State, see Ireland, pp. 277-287.

⁹⁴ Ireland, pp. 272-3 and 288-9.

⁹⁵ Ireland, pp. 288-290.

Wilson and intensified during the rising, inspiring an efflorescence of Mesopotamian newsprint culture.⁹⁶ As an alternative to suppression, Cox took a page from his political secretary, Gertrude Bell, in channeling a pro-British view through established Iraqi papers, the most important of them being *al-Iraq* under the editorship of veteran newspaper man Razuq Ghanim, selected by Bell for his moderate views for just such an experiment in 1917.⁹⁷ The day after Cox's November 11 announcement, *al Iraq* assured its readers that the British government intended "to confer wide privileges on the people" and that it was clear that the British intended to make good on its promise that "Mesopotamia should have an independent Government."⁹⁸ Ghanim was careful to protect his credibility as a legitimate journalist and not merely a mouthpiece for the British government, combining his insistence that the mandate relationship with the British was not enslavement and that Arabs could accept British assistance in building their nation without forfeiting their status as patriots with his attribution of the 1920 rising to British maladministration and their refusal to allow Arab participation in the government.⁹⁹ By cooperating with the British, *al Iraq* argued in early February 1921, the people of Mesopotamia stood to gain not only independence and self-government, but all the economic benefits of beginning national life as a major trade hub in the very heart, though decidedly not as a part, of the British Empire in the East.¹⁰⁰

Even before Cox's return to Iraq, the Baghdad Residency was beginning to report the appearance of troubling articles in the vernacular press openly opposed to the

⁹⁶ Civil Commissioner to Secretary of State for India September 11 1920. *BL, L/PS/11/172/P4000/1920*.

⁹⁷ Bashkin, pp. 38 and Ayalon, pp. 205-6. For a discussion of early British managed pro-British propaganda in the Iraqi press, see Hadi Tu'mah, *Al-Ihtilal Al-Baritani Wa-Al-Sihafah Al-'Iraqiyah: Dirasah Fi Al-Hamlah Al-Di'aiyah Al-Baritaniyah, 1914-1921*, (Tawzi' al-Dar al-Wataniyah lil-Tawzi' wa-al-Nashr, 1984), pp. 201-233.

⁹⁸ *al Iraq*, November 12 1920.

⁹⁹ *al Iraq*, December 04 1920.

¹⁰⁰ *al Iraq*, February 02 1921.

continuation of British rule in any form. Perhaps the earliest and certainly the most troublesome publication for the course of the mandate was Abd al Ghafur al Badri's *al Istiqlal*.¹⁰¹ According to Rafail Butti's early work on the Iraqi press, *al Istiqlal* was planned from Damascus as an Iraqi organ for the Syrian nationalist organization *al Ahd*, then reeling from the collapse of Faysal's attempt at Arab government and seeking to take advantage of the nationalist, or at least anti-colonialist energy of the Iraqi uprising.¹⁰² al Badri, an ex-cadet in the Turkish army known to have joined up with Faysal during the Arab Revolt, opened *al Istiqlal* on September 28, 1920 with an article emphasizing the importance of a free press to national independence and encouraging other writers to publish their minds without restraint. As would be characteristic of al Badri's critique of British rule in Iraq, extracts from the British press reflecting internal criticism of British policy were immediately apparent, in this case, "succulent extracts from Colonel Lawrence's letters" recently published in the *Times* were included to illustrate that, even experts in British policy in the Arab world recognized the responsibility of Wilson's administration in provoking the 1920 rising.¹⁰³

A few days after *al Iraq*'s assurance of British intentions and enjoinder of Arab cooperation, *al Istiqlal* countered Ghanim's interpretation of the mandates with the argument that the mandatory system itself was merely a means for the Allied empires to retain control of territories occupied during the war. As Iraqis under Wilson's administration and Faysal's experiences under the French in Syria had both shown, *al Istiqlal* argued "it is clear that in the eyes of the Allies the weak have no rights even if

¹⁰¹ For an overview of Iraqi political newspapers under the mandate with a rare collection of detailed information about ownership and editorship, see Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, pp. 64-104.

¹⁰² Rafail Butti, *Al-Sihafah Fi Al-'Iraq: Muhadarat Alqaha* (Bulaq: Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyyah, 1955), p. 58. Also see Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, pp. 71-73.

¹⁰³ Mesopotamia Police Reports for 1920. BL, L/PS/10/839/File 3467/1919

they be the allies and helpers of the strong.” The “Arab Confederation” of independent states desired by Iraqis and Syrians alike, *al Istiqlal* suggested, would never be permitted by Lloyd George because of the necessity of maintaining the good will of France to British international policy. Where Lloyd George had erred, however, was in failing to learn from the 1920 rising that, for Britain’s imperial future, “danger begins from the Eastern countries and not from France... especially when foreign hands are encouraging the great movement of the East and assisting it.”¹⁰⁴ Published out of Damascus, where he was exiled before the war for anti-Ottoman sedition, but closely attentive to the unfolding of events in his native Iraq, Baghdadi born journalist Ibrahim Hilmi’s *Lisan al Arab* far out distanced *al Istiqlal* in the vehemence of its hostility toward the British occupation. According to Butti, Hilmi had built a reputation for his mastery of wit and ridicule during his exile in Damascus, as well as a deeply rooted enmity for colonialism that, in his view, had strangled Faysal’s government in Syria before it had been given a chance to live.¹⁰⁵ In the final months of 1920 rising, *Lisan al Arab* published manifesto’s written by the tribal leaders of the rising themselves and even their instructions to insurgents wishing to keep the rising alive. Like al Badri, Hilmi placed the blame for the 1920 rising squarely on British maladministration, but went even further in defining the rising as a genuinely anti-colonialist movement in opposition to an equally genuine British bid “to turn the country into a colony.”¹⁰⁶ With the French doing their best to suppress sedition in print in Syria, *al Istiqlal* took precedence over *Lisan al Arab* in the Baghdad Residency’s reports on the press until Hilmi’s return to Baghdad in early 1921.

¹⁰⁴ *al Istiqlal*, November 14, 1920.

¹⁰⁵ Butti, p. 63. Also see `Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah Al-`Iraqiyah* ([S.l.: s.n.], Matba`at al-`Irfan), 1971), pp. 74.

¹⁰⁶ *Lisan al Arab*, October 06, 1920

One of the more unsettling components, for the Residency, of *al Istiqlal*'s commentary on developing Anglo-Iraqi relations in the fall of 1920 was the broad context of international, inter-imperial, and intra-imperial relations in which al Badri placed it. As Priya Satia has shown, many British administrators throughout the Middle East and even officials in London were possessed of an almost paranoid concern with the influence of Bolshevism on imperial subjects.¹⁰⁷ As early as November 1920, *al Istiqlal* was describing "The Victory of the Bolsheviks" during the war to its readers as well as the ongoing contest for influence between the imperial powers of Britain and France and Russia in the east in which "the Allies avoid meeting Russia and egg on small nations to oppose her, giving them supplies." The question for Iraqis was "will they be able to do that in the Near East?"¹⁰⁸ Certainly, British intelligence officers were concerned with Bolshevik influence in Iraq, with one officer reporting in November that "Bolshevik talk is on the increase in the coffee shops, [though] the speakers know nothing about Bolshevism, except that it promises an opportunity of overturning the existing order of things... and a chance of upsetting the power of the western nations and entirely freeing Islam from European influence."¹⁰⁹ For *al Istiqlal*, this was precisely the point. For, although the paranoid suspicions of a Bolshevik conspiracy in Iraq existed primarily in the imaginations of British officials, as Priya Satia and others have shown,¹¹⁰ it was not necessarily the ideology of the Bolsheviks that appealed to such editors as al Badri, but

¹⁰⁷ Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 6. See also, John Fisher, "Major Norman Bray and Eastern Unrest in the British Empire in the Aftermath of World War I," *Archives* 27, no. 106 (2002): 39-56.

¹⁰⁸ *al Istiqlal*, December 01 and 17, 1920.

¹⁰⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 01 for November 15, 1920 (8)

¹¹⁰ See Satia, Chapter 6 and Fisher.

rather the oppositional relationship of Bolshevism to the British Empire that held the attraction.

In his coverage of Bolshevism, al Badri invariably cast it as the main international force opposed to Allied imperialism. Accordingly, for example, whereas “the Bolsheviks fight for principles and beliefs,” including Lenin’s determination to end European imperialism, the Allied troops “fight for money” or, more to the point, for conquest. It was for this reason, al Badri argued, that “thoughtful men agree” that the Bolsheviks were, ultimately, “unconquerable.”¹¹¹ Even the British people themselves, al Badri suggested in reference to the Labour movement, believed as much as was apparent by the clear and deep inroads Lenin’s ideas had made among the British themselves.¹¹² By January 1921, *al Istiqlal* argued, Lloyd George’s refusal to conform to the internationalist principles represented by the Paris Peace Conference and the United States or the anti-imperialist principles represented by the Bolsheviks had drawn “victorious England... into difficulties formidable enough to destroy the greatest nation.”

American intervention in British relations with Ireland and Iraq indicates her intention to dominate England in the postwar world... her internal situation is serious by reason of the Irish revolt, Egypt demands complete independence and India has united to the same end... South Africa demands independence... the Bolsheviks [were] rousing British subjects against Britain... and the Labour Party is bent on the defeat of the present Cabinet.¹¹³

When the Lord Mayor of Cork died in prison as a result of his hunger strike in the name of Irish independence in November, *al Istiqlal* proclaimed him a hero, praised his patriotism, and cited his sacrifice as an example for all Iraqis to revere and to follow, taking the opportunity to revisit its standing critique of Lloyd George’s betrayal of

¹¹¹ *al Istiqlal*, November 28, 1920.

¹¹² *al Istiqlal*, December 01 and 17, 1920.

¹¹³ *al Istiqlal*, January 23, 1921.

Wilsonian principles at the League of Nations.¹¹⁴ In December, in an article entitled “What is there in England,” *al Istiqlal* gave vivid descriptions of the terroristic tactics of Sinn Fein in the name of Irish independence, including the use of threatening letters, killing of police, and the planned use of “motor cars to transport bombers... to blow up Government buildings and houses of High officials in London.”¹¹⁵ The next day, *al Istiqlal* published a detailed expose on “the Irish Question which is at present engrossing the attention of the world” and predicted that an Irish medical student hung for the death of a British soldier during a riot “will probably be proclaimed a martyr” for the cause of Irish independence.¹¹⁶ Even at the very heart of the British Empire, *al Istiqlal* emphasized in February 1921, the British were made to install fortifications around the offices of government against attack from their oldest imperial subjects.¹¹⁷ The logical conclusion to be drawn from such troubles, *al Istiqlal* had argued from its earliest publications, was that the British Empire would suffer the fate of all empires engaged in “oppressing subject nations.” Controlling some “500,000,000 souls” and “proud of her strength,” Britain “scorns the freedom and independence of [her] subjects.” As even the *Times* had only just commented, al Badri pointed out, “Iraq, this cemetery of so many empires bids fair to be the grave of Unionism.” Like “Alexander, Rome, and Spain,” *al Istiqlal* reasoned, the British Empire’s “fate is inevitable.”¹¹⁸

As early as November 1920, the Baghdad Residency reported observing “a feeling fostered by interested persons—that the British Empire is facing a crisis and has a

¹¹⁴ *al Istiqlal*, November 21, 1920.

¹¹⁵ *al Istiqlal*, December 18, 1920.

¹¹⁶ *al Istiqlal*, December 19, 1920.

¹¹⁷ *al Istiqlal*, February 02, 1921.

¹¹⁸ *al Istiqlal*, December 08, 1920.

tremendous opposition to face... and a hope in the hearts of some, and a fear in the hearts of others, that the British Government will ultimately admit failure and evacuate Iraq.” In particular, the report noted, an awareness in Iraq of “the campaign of economy in London” had given the “undue impression” that the opposition of the British public “will necessitate British withdrawal from these parts.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, as early as December 1920, influential members of the Shi’a *ulema* Muhammad al Sadr and Yusuf al Suwaydi were reported to be organizing a delegation to circumvent the Baghdad Residency and travel to London to present their case for Iraqi independence to the British government and people directly, if not “all the Capitals of Europe.”¹²⁰ By January 1921, *al Istiqlal* had already begun to identify individuals in the British government it perceived as sympathetic to the cause of Iraqi independence through clippings of Parliamentary debates. Al Badri quoted the Liberal representative for Hull, Commander Joseph Montague Kenworthy, for example, as having argued in Parliament that the Lloyd George administration had violated its ‘sacred trust’ with Iraqi people, for “instead of creating an Arab Government in Baghdad, the British had slain thousands of the inhabitants and exiled many more” and that, in his view, “a Labour Cabinet is the only solution,” foreshadowing Kenworthy’s own final conversion to Labour in the coming years.¹²¹

Illustrating his perception of the power of public opposition to British occupation, Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill took the opportunity of the army estimates debate in Parliament in December 1920 to blame the British press campaign to pull out of Mesopotamia for the outbreak of the 1920 rising. Quoting from a series of

¹¹⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 2 for November 30, 1920.

¹²⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 3 for December 15, 1920 and February 17, 1921.

¹²¹ *al Istiqlal* January 19, 1921.

telegrams between himself and the Baghdad Residency, Churchill illustrated how the policy of strict economy demanded by the British public had limited the ability of British forces to keep order to the point of endangering the entire endeavor. He was certain, he assured the House, that “all the loose talk which had been indulged in in the newspapers about the speedy evacuation of Mesopotamia was a factor which provoked the rebellion” in the first place. Should such sentiments drive the British out of Mesopotamia at that moment, he stated, the chaos that would follow would not only cost the British far more than his estimates, it would cost them their honor for the abandonment of the Mesopotamian Arabs to such a fate. Although he humbly accepted “in the full” his personal responsibility for the spike in expenditure in the region, Churchill expressed his certainty that, all told, even “the wildest anti-squander maniac in the House” would be forced to admit that “it could not possibly have been avoided.”¹²²

For its part, the Labour press worked to keep the contradiction between British interests in Mesopotamian oil and the principles of the mandate at the forefront of the public mind on the occupation. The *Labour Leader* kept its readers well informed, for example, of the growing Anglo-American tensions over Britain’s seeming attempt to monopolize access to the oil in Mosul. “Petroleum,” argued correspondent John W. Murby, “was rapidly becoming a ruling factor in national and international diplomacy” as well as casting new light on the meaning of the Great War, the principles of its settlement, and the future of its alliances.¹²³ Mandate or no, the economist George Horwill reported for the *Labour Leader*, the vested interests of the oil cartels were “operating as freely and as brazenly as if Mesopotamia were annexed, while the

¹²² *Times of London* December 16, 1920.

¹²³ *Labour Leader*, February 24, 1921.

suppression of the Arabs could not be greater if they were British subjects in revolt.” Moreover, the entire campaign was being built upon the backs of “cheap labour from India and Egypt.”¹²⁴ Such ideas were finding increasingly wide, if not as sharp, expression in the mainstream press as well. The *Times*, for example, clearly reflected the growing popular hostility toward expenditure in Mesopotamia, the belief that evacuation would not inspire panic in the region, but rejoicing, and the notion that all the government’s rhetoric was merely a smokescreen to camouflage its pursuit of Mesopotamian oil.¹²⁵

The seriousness of the political situation in Britain was reflected in the frenzied dispatches from the Secretaries of State for India and the Colonies to Cox pleading with him to cut expenditure to “the absolute minimum” and informing him that in the face of “universal and often unreasoning demand for economy in all directions” there could be no guarantee of the continued support for the mandate unless “some assured prospect of progressive retrenchment.”¹²⁶ Cox’s replies were sympathetic, but not very encouraging. Every reduction of British forces or funds reflected the weakness or lack of resolve with the potential to incite opposition, he insisted, while evacuation would only lead to the total loss of the country, and British investments, to anarchy or foreign encroachment. By the end of January 1921, Cox seemed to have concluded that the threat of evacuation was either as real as his superiors claimed, or a pressure tactic to force him into expenditure cuts he could not make and offered his resignation.¹²⁷ In reply, Churchill warned Cox that he “would take a great responsibility” in choosing to deprive His Majesty’s

¹²⁴ *Labour Leader* March 17, 1921

¹²⁵ See, for example, *Times of London* February 2, 3, 4 1921.

¹²⁶ Montague to Cox, December 01, 1920. This telegram and the subsequent exchanges are all in *BL*, *L/PS/11/172/P3795/1920*.

¹²⁷ Cox to Montague January 09, 1921 *BL*, *L/PS/11/172/P3795/1920*

Government of his knowledge and influence at such a delicate moment and assured him that he as well was exploring every alternative solution to the conundrum from his position in London.¹²⁸ The result of Churchill's endeavors would be codified in a revised approach to British affairs in the east generally at the Cairo Conference of 1921.

In February 1921, Churchill set in motion a series of developments designed to maximize British control in the Middle East while minimizing its cost beginning with the consolidation of British policy making in the region from the War, India, and Foreign Offices into a new department under his authority at the Colonial Office as Secretary of State for the Colonies.¹²⁹ In March 1921, Churchill gathered together all of the key administrators throughout the Middle East to discuss how best to approach British relations in the region around the principle of instituting indirect rule wherever possible and resorting to more costly forms of direct rule where absolutely necessary. The two anchors for Britain's new policy in Mesopotamia clearly illustrated the centrality as well as the limits of representative government for Churchill's scheme. The first policy imperative in Mesopotamia, according to the report, was to establish the appearance of representative indigenous government by orchestrating, with the utmost subtlety but at the earliest possible moment, the popular 'selection' of Faysal as the ruler of Mesopotamia. The second, assuming the first could be effectively achieved, was to

¹²⁸ Churchill to Cox, January 16, 1921 *BL, L/PS/11/172/P3795/1920*

¹²⁹ Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, June 1921, p. 1 *NA, AIR/8/37*. Also see Bruce Westrate's *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) for a discussion of the interdepartmental issues leading up to the merger and Christopher Catherwood's *Churchill's Folly: How Winston Churchill Created Modern Iraq* (New York: Carroll & Graf Pub., 2004) for a discussion of Churchill's approach to British policy in the Arab world.

replace the costly and cumbersome British and Indian ground forces in the region with an experimental program of control from the air through the recently formed Royal Air Force designed to keep the restless tribal hinterland from disturbing the Anglo-Iraqi nation making project underway in the urban centers.¹³⁰

Churchill left no question that the primary principle at the heart of his approach to Anglo-Arab relations in general was the reduction of its cost to the British taxpayer to the absolute minimum. In Mesopotamia, the enthronement of Faysal bin Husayn, Churchill confidently informed Lloyd George from Cairo, was “far and away the best chance of saving our money.”¹³¹ Having learned a valuable lesson about imperial power, the limitations of popular political maturity, and the value of compromise from his experiences with the French, Faysal promised to be both a pliable and grateful candidate the position of British client in Iraq. Although not from Iraq, Faysal’s leadership of the Arab Revolt, the foundational moment of the Pan-Arab national myth, and his “inspiring personality” were believed capable of “pulling together the scattered elements of a backward and half civilized country” into the service of his government and, especially, his national army. Moreover, Faysal’s awareness that the subsidies and protection his father Husayn enjoyed in Mecca and his brother Abdullah in Trans-Jordan would be “dependent upon his own good behavior” promised to make Faysal “much easier to deal with.”¹³² The problem of arranging for Faysal’s popular election without generating suspicion that he was simply a tool of the British or raising a preponderance of “confused or meaningless expression of Mesopotamian opinion” lay in the hands of Cox.

¹³⁰ Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, June 1921, p. 4-5. *NA, AIR/8/37*

¹³¹ Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs summoned to meet in Cairo during March 1921, by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. p. 1. *STA, BG165-0045 Cairo Conference*

¹³² Report on Middle East Conference held in Cairo and Jerusalem, June 1921, p. 40-45. *NA, AIR/8/37*

The confidence of the Conference in Cox's ability to accomplish this feat lay in its expectations that Faysal would declare his candidacy for the throne within three months and that the announcement "would result in such a definite expression of public feeling on his behalf as would make it unnecessary for us to ask the congress to discuss the question of the ruler, they would simply confirm directly or indirectly his nomination." With Faysal in place, it was assumed, any government selected by him would automatically be imbued with legitimacy, irrespective of the manner in which it was called to assemble.¹³³

The anticipated effect of Faysal's 'election' in Mesopotamia was put most succinctly by Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard in his report on air control in Mesopotamia for the Conference: "as a result of the selection of an Arab ruler satisfactory to the country, the country is free from organized rebellion, but is liable to ordinary spasmodic disturbances."¹³⁴ Having received the representative Arab government they demanded, it was assumed, educated Iraqis at the urban power centers would be content. With only "spasmodic disturbances" outside of those centers to worry about, there was no reason to believe that control of the country could not be maintained by a handful of early warning intelligence operatives scattered throughout the country, RAF squadrons at Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul prepared to fly out and put down any larger risings that should occur, and an Arab army in place to defend the larger cities from attacks trained and supported by a few battalions of British servicemen.¹³⁵ With Lloyd George's approval, Churchill wrote, he could begin "driving large numbers of

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74-78.

troops and followers out of country and off our pay list... as fast as I can bring them to port... thus securing large savings in 1921-22.”¹³⁶

In early May, at the next Parliamentary debate over Army Estimates, Churchill debuted his plan in brief. The *Daily Telegraph* was, characteristically, enthusiastic of the government’s scheme, describing “a ‘chain of autonomous States’ in South-Western Asia, of which the British Empire will be the guardian, or, perhaps, we might say, the suzerain.” Mesopotamia, the writers imagined, would become the central node of a web of “trans-continental air routes,” the Suez Canal of air travel at which point “the lines from Britain to the Britannic East and South-East will convene.”¹³⁷ The *Daily Telegraph*’s description of air control was no less romantic.

We are to understand that at a hint of trouble among the tribesmen ...the mobile and ubiquitous plane... will swoop down upon a village and put the fear of the law into the turbulent hearts of its inhabitants. An aeroplane can track the Bedouin and other marauders to their lairs, and hunt them out from fastnesses which infantry and artillery could not reach, and where there are no roads for the tanks or armoured cars... We shall no longer be pouring out millions annually for the maintenance of a powerful army hundreds of miles from the sea and the British and Indian taxpayer will be sensibly relieved.¹³⁸

Editorials in the *Times* were less enamored with the scheme. As one contributor wrote, whether it was spent on troops, airplanes, or subsidies to kings and tribal leaders, the millions of pounds sterling being expended in the Middle East “to carry out the grandiose schemes of Pan-Arab dreamers” represented a “new and heavily subsidized Empire... we cannot afford and do not want.”

¹³⁶ Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs summoned to meet in Cairo during March 1921, by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. p. 1. *STA, BG165-0045 Cairo Conference*. For a discussion on the introduction of the RAF as a mode of imperial control, see Priya Satia, “The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia,” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (February 2006) and Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, Ch. 7.

¹³⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, May 10, 1921.

¹³⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, May 10, 1921.

Our policy should be to keep out of entanglements in Arabia, to reduce our commitments in Mesopotamia to the smallest possible compass, and to declare that we cannot grant permanent subsidies to Arab chieftains any more than we can to the coal industry.¹³⁹

An article in the *Daily Herald* entitled “The Muddled East” was representative of the Labour press’ reaction to the scheme.

Churchill’s reference to Britain’s “obligations of honour,” the writer argued, harkened back to Asquith’s calls to arms that had led Britain into the occupation of Mesopotamia in the first place and equally decried “the falsehood that has corrupted the whole blood-stained story of our empire.”

Always we have gone here and there progressing that we were safeguarding the rights of ‘natives’ that we could not abandon them to ‘anarchy’ and so forth. But always loot has been the object; and always our honour has been forfeited, and our promises broken, when they conflicted with our financial interests... The pretense that we are in Mesopotamia for the health of the Arabs is too thin. We are there because Mesopotamia is, potentially, one of the richest countries of the world--particularly in oil. Mr. Churchill talks now about setting up an Arab Government under an Arab head: but he has to confess that the attempt of the Arabs to do that has been suppressed as a ‘rebellion,’ at great cost of blood and money... Our foreign policy is radically dishonest. It is no use tinkering at it. We must get back to first principles and do right: and that the Coalition will never do. The whole thing would be perfectly simple if we really considered the interest of other races, instead of talking about it--and spending money on armaments and wars.¹⁴⁰

The Iraqi press had already begun to take issue with Churchill’s plans even before the Cairo Conference had had an opportunity to meet. Characteristically, *al Istiqlal* led the charge in early February 1921. The fact that responsibility had been transferred “from Milner to Churchill,” or from the India Office to the Colonial Office, in the first

¹³⁹ *Times of London*, May 09, 1921.

¹⁴⁰ *Daily Herald*, June 15, 1921.

place meant, for *al Istiqlal*, that the British “consider these countries as Colonies.” The idea that Iraq could be made into a British colony was “laughable and nonsensical” for *al Istiqlal* in that, the Iraqi people had awakened to their national identity and “will submit to no foreign Government however important, rich or commercial.” But also because the international community had already spoken and continued to speak its opposition to such encroachments, as the recent agreement between two former imperial powers, Russia and Turkey, to assist one another in “liberating the Islamic countries and India and giving complete independence to all Islamic peoples” had shown.¹⁴¹ A few days later after the transition, *al Istiqlal* announced its own seven point program for the government, including:

1) liberty of press, 2) freedom to hold meetings and political parties, 3) unconditional amnesty to political prisoners, 4) return of deportees, 5) abolition of martial law, 6) abolition of military courts, 7) hastening of elections without interference.¹⁴²

“Iraqi people,” *al Istiqlal* declared, “cannot negotiate with a government that denies them this.”¹⁴³

By the publication of these points, *al Istiqlal* had already pushed Cox’s determination to take as liberal an approach to the press as possible to its limits. With *Lisan al Arab*, *al Istiqlal* had dogged every step of Cox’s assembly of the Council of State over the fall of 1920 and the spring of 1921, not merely as an imperial institution, but as an unconstitutional one. *Al Istiqlal* ridiculed “certain individuals roaming the streets and fighting with each other for a position” in Cox’s Council, warning its readers that unless the Iraqi people voiced their demand for “a permanent representative

¹⁴¹ *al Istiqlal*, February 04, 1921.

¹⁴² *al Istiqlal*, February 09, 1921. Also, see Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 60.

¹⁴³ *al Istiqlal*, February 09, 1921.

assembly as soon as possible,” the “purportedly temporary” British appointed government would become a permanent fixture of the Iraqi state.¹⁴⁴ The policy of every true Iraqi, *al Istiqlal* insisted, should be “that Iraq has an independent Government in the legal and political sense of the world.”¹⁴⁵ By December, *al Istiqlal* was offering articles from the British *Morning Post* announcing that Faysal had already been offered the throne of Mesopotamia to prove that the Iraqi people would have no more say in the leadership of their state than they would in the form of government it would have.¹⁴⁶ *Lisan al Arab* was also in agreement with *al Istiqlal*’s suspicion of British intentions upon hearing the reports of Faysal’s selection for the Amirate in the British press, though Hilmi was even earlier and more direct in identifying Faysal as “a tool of the British” and warning his Iraqi kinsmen not to allow him to reign.¹⁴⁷ In turn, *al Istiqlal* celebrated the rejection of office by men like Muzahim Beg al Pachachi, who, according to *al Istiqlal*, refused to “deny his principles for the sake of appointment,” which he refused.¹⁴⁸ *Al Istiqlal* described those who had taken position in the provisional government as men bewildered by the promise of power and influence and who would likely seek to “obliterate the thought of elections,” rather than risk losing those benefits to democratic whims.¹⁴⁹ *Lisan al Arab* followed suit, arguing that even an elected governmental body would be suspect under Iraq’s current position, “where martial law is prevailing and the country is under heavy regulations.” All of the “advantages of election will be lost,”

¹⁴⁴ *al Istiqlal*, October 27, 1920.

¹⁴⁵ *al Istiqlal*, November 24, 1920.

¹⁴⁶ *al Istiqlal*, December 12, 1920.

¹⁴⁷ *Lisan al Arab*, November 13, 1920. According to Butti, Hilmi’s enmity of European colonial ideals translated into a deep suspicion of Faysal as he became Britain’s choice for the Iraqi throne, Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 63.

¹⁴⁸ *al Istiqlal*, January 30, 1921.

¹⁴⁹ *al Istiqlal*, February 02, 1921.

Hilmi argued, “when it results in the success of certain individuals who may not know anything about the national duties except to bow and submit to might.”¹⁵⁰

By *al Istiqlal*'s announcement of its seven points in February, Cox had reached his limit, shutting down the paper that very day and, operating through the provisional government, arrested al Badri and eight others, raided their offices and homes, and confiscated all materials relating to publication. By April, however, the number of applications for new newspapers had become so great that Cox appointed a committee to develop the Ottoman press laws for the new regime.¹⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, the committee determined to keep the strict regulation and hefty punishments for any sort of sedition or defamation of the state or its agents of the Ottoman laws as they were, and even raised the license fees.¹⁵²

al Istiqlal's was not the only “confused or meaningless expression of Mesopotamian opinion,” to quote Churchill, about Churchill's plans for the development of its government. A slightly more thorny problem was the somewhat unexpected interest of a handful of Iraqi notables and Sheikhs in competing with Faysal for the throne of Iraq. In ‘preparing the ground’ for Faysal's arrival, Cox had inadvertently sparked widespread interest in an actual ‘election’ of an Iraqi King. By April, the Baghdad Residence reported that a variety of social and political factions throughout the country were negotiating their support for a number of different candidates, including the Faysal, his brother Abdullah, the Naqib, notable of Basra and sometimes British client Sayid Talib, and even the Persian Sheikh of Mohammerah. By mid-April, Cox

¹⁵⁰ *Lisan al Arab*, February 22, 1921.

¹⁵¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12 for April 24, 1921.

¹⁵² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 13 for May 02, 1921. Also see Bashkin, p. 37.

acknowledged to Churchill that “the problem” of alternative candidates had become “a somewhat difficult one” in that, technically, “there was no logical *prima facie* reason why we should object to [their] candidacy.”¹⁵³ Friendly suggestions from Cox to the elderly Naqib were enough to discourage his candidacy. Discouraging the Sheikh of Mohammerah required a more probing inquiry into his Persian heritage. The bullish, power seeking opportunist Sayid Talib was another matter altogether, but Cox found the opportunity in some untoward comments made by Talib at a dinner party to deport him to Ceylon in short order.¹⁵⁴ By the end of April, the Baghdad Residency could report that the sensation caused by Talib’s deportation had the desired effect of scaring off mischief-makers and reassuring moderates and tribal chiefs that the British intended to keep a lid on rampant self-promotion and irresponsible nationalism.¹⁵⁵ Coincidentally, on the very day of Sayid Talib’s dinner party, the sentencing of the staff of *al Istiqlal* was meted out. For acts of sedition against the provisional government, the paper’s editor, al Badri, received eighteen months in prison and a Rs. 3,000 fine, his senior and junior staff members receiving twelve months and six months respectively. The harshness of this first sentencing under the provisional government was clearly intended to offer an example to the deluge of potential critics then petitioning for licenses to publish.¹⁵⁶ As the Residency’s report for the month of April reflected, the time was considered ripe for the announcement of Faysal’s candidacy for the throne at the earliest possible moment and, to insure the diffusion of any “timorous feelings induced by recent events,” an

¹⁵³ Cox to Secretary of State for the Colonies, April 12, 1921. NA, CO/370/01/399-401

¹⁵⁴ Cox to Secretary of State for the Colonies, April 16, 1921. NA, CO/370/01/434-437

¹⁵⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 13, for April 20, 1921.

¹⁵⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11, for April 13, 1921.

accompanying announcement of a general amnesty for all participants in the rising of 1920.¹⁵⁷

A few days later, articles celebrating the accomplishments and heroic standing of Faysal and his family and arguing that, if not for their efforts, “the Arab race could not now demand their rights” began to appear in *al Iraq*.¹⁵⁸ Subsequent articles appearing that May took examples from British periodicals and Parliamentary speeches implying that the British government and people desired Iraq to become independent and to have self-government and that beliefs to the contrary were grounded in a misunderstanding that coming events would clear away.¹⁵⁹ In its support of Faysal as a potential candidate for the throne, *al Iraq* described constitutional monarchies in Europe and elsewhere demonstrating that modern kings no longer “exercise... tyrannical powers” but were “guided by the wishes of the people.”¹⁶⁰ By June, *al Iraq* was offering testimonials from Iraqis of their desire for Faysal based on his standing in the Arab world, his accomplishments as a leader, and his commitment to Arab unity and independence with some declaring that waiting for the promulgation of a constitution and elections was unnecessary.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, Faysal’s supporters in Iraq, such as future Prime Minister and Sherifian officer Nuri Said, were busily writing letters to regional notables asking them to personally write to King Husayn to ask him to send one of his sons to govern Iraq.¹⁶² On June 15, Churchill delivered a speech in Parliament celebrating Iraqi efforts to advance their government, which the Residency reported as having “produced an

¹⁵⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11 for April 15, 1921.

¹⁵⁸ *al Iraq*, April 26, 1921.

¹⁵⁹ *al Iraq*, April 30, 1921.

¹⁶⁰ *al Iraq*, May 04, 1921.

¹⁶¹ *al Iraq*, June 01, 1921.

¹⁶² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 14. for June 01, 1921.

excellent impression... the public as a whole [was] glad to have a lead from His Majesty's Government. This is indeed what they have long been asking for.”¹⁶³ The Residency acknowledged, however, that the relative quietude of oppositional opinion was not unrelated to the fact that, “since the suppression of the Istiqlal the vernacular press is represented only by the Iraq” and that a number of editors had already completed the licensing process and were poised to begin publication.¹⁶⁴

By the end of June, Ibrahim Hilmi had returned to Baghdad and resumed publication of *Lisan al Arab* from there. Although Hilmi agreed with Churchill that Iraqis were indeed committed to advancing the progress of political life, he warned his readers that the advent of a constitutional monarchy and election of a Constituent Assembly believed to be immanent were as much a result of the realization by the British government that “they needed a friendly Iraq to defend their imperial interests... in the face of Turkish and Bolshevik threats.”¹⁶⁵ In its third publication in late June, *al Dijlah*, edited by a young Iraqi lawyer named Daud al Sa'di, distinguished between Iraq's “natural independence” which had been accomplished by the unifying act of the 1920 rising, and her “legal independence,” which remained “temporarily bound.” The power to break those legal fetters, *al Dijlah* argued, did not lay in the hands of the British, but in those of the Iraqi people. According to Butti, a key motivation for opening *al Dijlah* when al Sa'di did was the public debate over the selection of an Iraqi King and confusion over the kind of power he would wield. Accordingly, al Sa'di immediately offered expository essays on modern constitutional government in which all power originates from the national will of the people, and not cascading down from the royal will of the

¹⁶³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17, for June 15, 1921.

¹⁶⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 15, for June 15, 1920.

¹⁶⁵ *Lisan al Arab*, June 24, 1921.

monarch.¹⁶⁶“Following the way worthy of a nation which wants to live a free life,” *al*

Dijlah insisted, meant that the Iraqi people

must prove that we are able to administer our own affairs... what the nation hopes for is a National Congress to make a Constitutional Law... and the establishment of a strong and permanent Government elected by the nation... according to this law.¹⁶⁷

al Dijlah followed up the next day with an article demanding free elections and the erection of a government that would be obedient to their wishes and resistant to the will of those desiring to “gamble with the rights of the people.”¹⁶⁸ *Lisan al Arab* concurred a few days later, insisting that “the nation is very anxious to hasten the elections for the Iraq Congress.” The reason being, the writer argued, that “the existing government though formed of good men is considered illegal, as the nation had no part in forming it” and, despite the clear approval of the nation of Faysal, he had not, as of yet, been legally elected. It was the duty of the Council of State to arrange for a democratically elected Congress, which would then take responsibility for the formation of a Constitutional Law and arrange for the legal election of Faysal by the people of Iraq. “There is no use in a king without a law and a parliament, the position of which should be above that of the throne,” the writer argued, “like Mr. Churchill, we wish for a constitutional king.”¹⁶⁹ *Al Dijlah* added the United States and the nations of continental Europe to the list of governments possessed of the kind of constitutional democracy Iraqis desired and criticized those who would declare Faysal King of Iraq prematurely and without a popular election.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 65-66.

¹⁶⁷ *al Dijlah*, June 27, 1921.

¹⁶⁸ *al Dijlah*, June 28, 1921.

¹⁶⁹ *Lisan al Arab*, July 2, 1921.

¹⁷⁰ *al Dijlah*, July 2, 4, and 14, 1921.

We oppose the idea of a coronation before the meeting of the Congress. Any king who is crowned in Iraq without the consent of the nation is not a constitutional king. We demand a king for the sake of independence not because we live the person of the king. The free nation of the Iraq can elect any one they wish.¹⁷¹

Recognizing that postponing the election of a head of state until a Congress could be called involved its own shortcomings, *Lisan al Arab* recommended a referendum be held. Citing examples of referendums in Europe and the United States, the writer argued that in lieu of a constitutional law and especially in a region occupied by foreign forces, a referendum was the most legitimate way of ascertaining the democratic voice of the people on the question of the crown.¹⁷² The paper followed up a few days later with an essay on the application of the referendum for the popular election of sovereigns in global history from ancient times to the present.¹⁷³

Fearing that a referendum would weaken Faysal's position, according to Ireland, on July 8, 1921, Cox conveyed to the Council of State his impression of "an increasingly insistent demand on the part of the public for an immediate opportunity to decide who shall be ruler." In so far as he was concerned, he informed them, he would support "any appropriate special measures which the Council may recommend for that purpose."¹⁷⁴ On July 11, the provisional government unanimously declared Faysal King of Iraq, provided that his government shall be constitutional, representative, and democratic.¹⁷⁵

Faced with a *fait accompli*, *al Dijlah* and *Lisan al Arab* sought to preemptively define the powers Faysal would have as King in relation to those of the Iraqi people. On the day of the Council's acceptance of Faysal, *al Dijlah* published an article on the

¹⁷¹ *al Dijlah*, July 4, 1921.

¹⁷² *Lisan al Arab*, July 6, 1921.

¹⁷³ *Lisan al Arab*, July 9, 1921.

¹⁷⁴ Ireland, pp. 330-331.

¹⁷⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17, for June 11, 1921.

history of monarchy as a form of government, noting that the former “tyrannous authority” of kings had given way everywhere to the authority of the people. “In England,” the writer illustrated, “the king can write to no one without showing the letter to the prime minister.” Officials of government, he argued, were the servants of the people, who paid them for their service.¹⁷⁶ *Lisan al Arab* also offered comparative illustrations on various forms of government, paying especially close attention to how constitutional government operated in Britain.¹⁷⁷ As was “natural in constitutional countries” *Lisan al Arab* pointed out, the ascension of a king should be followed by the formation of a new cabinet. *Lisan al Arab* expressed its hope that this would be the case in Iraq and that “the first Legal Cabinet” in Iraq would “consist of the best men in whom the nation has confidence” and established “on the firm promises given by [Faysal] to the nation to form a Representative Government and enjoy the privileges enjoyed by other free and independent countries.”¹⁷⁸ *Lisan al Arab* followed up the next day with a consideration of “Political Life in the West” focusing on the role of political parties in influencing the direction of government and offering “no doubt... that people will form such parties here... in the public interest.”¹⁷⁹ It was around this time that *al Fallah* opened its presses as a political science journal launched by alumni of the Istanbul Military College. Although invested in presenting itself as a journal of science and literature, *al Fallah* nevertheless viewed educating the public on the nature of politics its *raison d’etre*¹⁸⁰ and opened its pages with discussions of the importance of political party

¹⁷⁶ *al Dijlah*, July 11, 1921.

¹⁷⁷ *Lisan al Arab* July 21 and 28, 1921

¹⁷⁸ *Lisan al Arab*, August 20, 1921.

¹⁷⁹ *Lisan al Arab*, August 22, 1921.

¹⁸⁰ Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 61.

formation to the welfare of the country including foreign examples to illustrate that fact.¹⁸¹

When the first Cabinet under Faysal was formed that September, the President of the Council of Ministers proclaimed that “a nation cannot pursue the course of progress and cannot advance on the road of civilization unless it relies on a democratic, representative and constitutional government.”¹⁸² *Al Dijlah* responded with a ramping up of its criticism of the presence of foreign administrators in Iraq. Iraqi representation in the administration, the writer argued, was ten percent at best and with poor pay while Indians, Persians, Armenians, and Egyptians with high salaries and subsidized rent were eating away at Iraqi revenues. *Al Dijlah* was careful to exclude British officers with the argument that “Iraqis are willing to accept people of a high civilization but why these who are no better than themselves?”¹⁸³ Already, *Lisan al Arab* had been arguing for weeks that “the Departments of Posts, Telegraphs, and Railways are full of strangers: Indians, Persians, and Egyptians, who might be replaced by capable Baghdadis,” asking “if training in Financial and Political work is not going to begin now, when will it begin?”¹⁸⁴ What was needed, *Lisan al Arab* insisted, was the immediate erection of “Chambers of Commerce and the Committees to protect the rights of labour” to keep the “foreigners from... sucking the blood of the natives.”¹⁸⁵ In September 1921, Rashid al Hashimi and Sami Kundah’s *al Rafidan* demanded that Faysal’s new cabinet make promulgating a law of nationality one of its first priorities, arguing that it will be necessary to regulate the coming elections and the problem of settlement and immigration

¹⁸¹ *al Fallah*, August 24, 1921.

¹⁸² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 21 September 11, 1921. NA, FO/371/6353.

¹⁸³ *al Dijlah*, September 15, 1921.

¹⁸⁴ *Lisan al Arab*, August 30, 1921.

¹⁸⁵ *Lisan al Arab*, September 20, 1921.

that Iraqis would surely face.¹⁸⁶ Having been politically weaned as “young adventures with the secret nationalist societies in Syria and Iraq,” according to Butti, and got their start under al Badri at *al Istiqlal*, al Hashimi and Kundah were characteristically provocative in their publications, for which they would pay with suppressions comparable only with *al Istiqlal* over the course of *al Rafidan*’s publishing life.¹⁸⁷ Iraq was so saturated by the Egyptian and especially Indian subject peoples of the British Empire, *al Rafidan* argued that it was like “a colony among the Nations,” noting the similar manner in which the French and British used foreign subject peoples to administer other colonies.¹⁸⁸ Although the insistence of the ‘extreme nationalist’ Iraqi press on the replacement of British imperial subjects, and eventually, British officers themselves, serving in the Iraqi government with Iraqis would be a persistent theme for the course of the mandate, in November 1921 the press’ attention dramatically shifted with the announcement in Geneva that an Anglo-Iraqi Treaty might soon be in the offing.

In September of 1920 Cox had been instructed to offer Faysal, should he press for such a document, a formal treaty arrangement between Britain and Iraq as a gesture of British good faith to lure him into the throne and to assuage the enmity of the Iraqi people for the mandate.¹⁸⁹ On October 10, 1921, France and Turkey provided an additional motivation to move beyond the mandate in defining Anglo-Iraqi relations with the Ankara Treaty, in which Turkey acknowledged French imperial sovereignty over Syria in exchange for an adjustment of the Turko-Syrian border in Turkey’s favor. Turkish

¹⁸⁶ *al Rafidan*, September 30, 1921.

¹⁸⁷ Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 67.

¹⁸⁸ *al Rafidan*, October 17, 1921.

¹⁸⁹ ‘Mesopotamia. Appointment of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner: Instructions of His Majesty’s Government, September 01 1920. NA, FO 371/5229/E10758

claims to Syrian territory and France's concession to those claims, the Colonial Office determined, pointed up the vulnerability of Iraq, which, like Syria, had never been formally relinquished by Turkey, to similar claims.¹⁹⁰ On November 18, 1921, British representative at the League of Nations John Fisher undertook to preempt any such challenges to the territorial integrity of Iraq by announcing his government's intention to augment the mandate relationship with an Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in which Britain would acknowledge Iraq as a nation inclusive of all territories designated under the mandate. Despite the seemingly progressive program Fisher's announcement might have suggested, as Peter Sluglett has noted, it marked the beginning of the end of an era of cooperation between Iraqis and the British.¹⁹¹

Fisher's descriptions of Anglo-Iraqi progress and cooperation that had led to the decision to implement the treaty were effusive, reflecting Britain's scrupulous adherence to the principles of the League of Nations and the Iraqi peoples' irrepressible yearning for responsible self-rule at the earliest possible moment. Finding themselves, "unable to resist the overwhelming desire of the people of Iraq for the formation of a National Government under an Arab ruler," Fisher argued, the British government offered their "recognition of a local sovereign whose recent accession to the throne followed upon the universal demand of the people of the country." Fisher then illustrated, quoting liberally from Faysal's accession speeches, the new King's readiness "to ensure that the Government of Iraq shall be carried on in strict conformity with the spirit of the Covenant of the League," including the immediate election of a representative constituent assembly to draft "the constitution of its independence" that would "define the fundamental

¹⁹⁰ See minute by Young in NA, CO/730/16/572242/270

¹⁹¹ Sluglett, p. 72-3.

principles of political and social life.” The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, Fisher proposed, was meant to acknowledge the fact that, as a nation, Iraq had already outgrown the ambiguous status of mandate and required something more detailed to define her relationship with her foremost partner and ally. That being said, Fisher was most explicit in assuring the League that the “spirit and the letter” of the mandate relationship would maintain and that

the proposed Treaty will serve merely to regulate the relationship between His Majesty’s Government, as mandatory power, and the Arab Government of Iraq. It is not intended as a substitute for the mandate which will remain the operative document defining the obligations undertaken by His Majesty’s Government on behalf of the League of Nations.¹⁹²

Interestingly, it was Fisher’s description of Iraqi progress that elicited the most aggressive criticisms in the British press.

On December 27, 28, and 29 1921, the *Times* published a series of articles entitled “Mesopotamian Mystery” by their Tehran correspondent that gave the clearest expression in the mainstream press of arguments being made in the *Labour Leader*, *Daily Herald*, *Foreign Affairs* and ILP and UDC pamphlets with titles like *Heroes*, *Huns*, and *Hypocrites* and *Democracy Done Brown* for months. The articles retold the sordid history of Britain’s struggle to keep control of the Persian Gulf, first with her imperial rivals, then with the League of Nations, and finally with her newfound Arab client rulers. The writer described the imposition of Faysal on the Iraqi people as a mockery of democracy and his new cabinet as a “sham government” through which the British intended now to force a “sham treaty,” all for the sake of Mesopotamian oil. The story of Iraqi progress itself was a testimony to the power of vested interests to control governments and manipulate international perceptions. The only policy that should be

¹⁹² “Draft of Oral Statement to be made to the Council of the League of Nations by the British Representative,” Nov. 17, 1921. NA, CO/730/16/E7242/273

acceptable to the British people, argued the writer, would be to immediately evacuate the region and end this embarrassing, duplicitous, and expensive fiasco.¹⁹³

The “Mesopotamian Mystery” articles caused quite a sensation in London and a flurry of inter-departmental dispatches on how best to react between the Foreign and Colonial Offices. Although an incensed Cox had drafted a point-by-point rebuttal, it was determined best to refrain from comment.¹⁹⁴ Matters would not be so easy to settle in Iraq, however. On the day of Fisher’s announcement, Cox reported the first of a series of stormy meetings with Faysal in which the new King expressed his concerns that recent events had gone far to undermine popular perceptions of British good faith and indeed, his own, in erecting a legitimately self-governing state in Iraq. By ceding mandated territory to Turkey, Faysal argued, France had clearly demonstrated that the obligations of mandatory powers to the League were not as binding as the British had claimed.¹⁹⁵ Britain’s failure to even object to the Ankara Agreement only validated, for Faysal, popular fears that the British might choose to cede Iraqi territory to either France or Turkey if they determined it in their imperial interests to do so. In light of these fears, Fisher’s announcement that the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty would not abrogate the mandate seemed to suggest that the British were merely using the League and the mandate to keep control over a region they might just as easily grant independence to. If the British chose to “shortsightedly insist on making a travesty of treaty demonstrating that Iraq is still a mandated people and I a puppet King,” Faysal argued, “I as King will be given a hopeless

¹⁹³ *Times of London*, December 27, 28, and 29 1921.

¹⁹⁴ For the collection of dispatches relating to the “Mesopotamian Mystery” articles, see *NA/CO/730/16/64311*

¹⁹⁵ Cox to Churchill, November 18, 1921. *NA, CO/730/16/572242/389*

task for you will incur suppressed enmity of three quarters of people of country which will find violent expression at any moment of difficulty and which you can only keep under by presumptuous force.”¹⁹⁶ Faysal bristled at what he perceived, according to Cox, to be a “loud clamour... raised by a section of the London press for the accelerated withdrawal of British troops from Iraq,” but even more troubling for Faysal, was the fact that even “his friends in Iraq are beginning to entertain doubts of his seriousness of purpose” and that he was, in fact, merely “a puppet in the hands of Great Britain.”¹⁹⁷

Over the fall of 1921 and spring of 1922, Cox reported, Faysal became increasingly un-budging in his refusal to admit any treaty draft that “intended to maintain mandatory relations... whether it is expressed explicitly or in a camouflaged form.” Contributing to Faysal’s intransigence, Cox noted, was “the enormous increase in the strength of nationalist sentiment” since the Fisher announcement, coupled with the popular unwillingness among both “the public” and “intelligent opinion” to “tolerate mandatory relations” in light of witnessing how “a parallel mandate has been interpreted or misinterpreted by the French.” Faysal’s fears that imposing a treaty on an unwilling Iraqi public would surely generate a “storm of controversy,” Cox insisted, were no exaggeration. Moreover, he suggested, “it seems in view of the attitude of the British tax-payer more prudent to secure good-will of Iraqis by giving them what they want” and, thus, place the “onus of failure” on them.¹⁹⁸

Two days prior to Fisher’s announcement at Geneva, *Lisan al Arab* was already warning Iraqis that, as subjects of the British Colonial Office, any treaty with Britain would “mean the acceptance of a protectorate and relinquishment of our right to complete

¹⁹⁶ Cox to Churchill, December 20, 1921. NA, CO/730/08

¹⁹⁷ Cox to Churchill, February 8 and 14, 1922. NA CO/730/19/6768

¹⁹⁸ Cox to Churchill, February 27, 1922. NA, CO/730/20/10151

independence... Independent governments conclude treaties with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs alone.”¹⁹⁹ Upon receiving word of Fisher’s statement, *Lisan al Arab* nevertheless reacted with a kind of disbelief. After taking on Fisher’s statements point by point to illustrate their incompatibility with ‘complete independence,’ Hilmi assured Iraqis that the words of Fisher’s statement, “cannot as it stands be taken as a correct explanation of British policy in Iraq as it is in truth.” Rather, “Dr. Fisher’s speech was intended to reassure divergent opinion till the matter should be settled and justice done,” by which he meant the drafting of “the forthcoming treaty whereby Britain would recognize the complete independence of the country.”²⁰⁰ *Al Iraq* as well took the statement as unrepresentative of British policy, arguing, erroneously, that Fisher was a representative of the League and, as such, “gives a general expression of the views of the League.” British policy, *al Iraq* argued, should be understood, rather, from Churchill’s speeches, which “already declared that there is no mandate in Iraq which has an independent National Government.” There was no question that the final treaty would, accordingly, abrogate the mandate.²⁰¹ Into the spring of 1922, *Lisan al Arab* and others nevertheless complained bitterly of the lack of information given to the people about the treaty’s progress. “Rumours are conflicting,” one writer warned, “the anxiety of the people should be satisfied by full information.”²⁰² Less ambiguously, *Lisan al Arab* confirmed Faysal’s warnings to Cox in late February in stating that, “If the treaty is to... simply complete the mandate, Iraq will reject it and will not admit this false mandate, which was the result of a bargain between the great Powers. But if it is a treaty between equal

¹⁹⁹ *Lisan al Arab*, November 16, 1921.

²⁰⁰ *Lisan al Arab*, December 2, 1921.

²⁰¹ *al Iraq*, December 2, 1921.

²⁰² *Lisan al Arab*, February 12, 1922.

Powers, the Iraq will welcome it and believe it to be a proof of the fulfillment of promises.”²⁰³

By the end of 1921, however, the Iraqi press was transitioning away from a focus on British promises and League principles as the foremost legitimating factors for their claims to independence and more towards evidence of what Iraqi writers described as a ‘global national awakening’ in the peripheries and even the metropole of the British Empire and beyond. What began with talk of the “waking of the Arabs” in early 1921,²⁰⁴ segued into a broader discussion of “awakening races” and “awakening subject peoples” generally by 1922.²⁰⁵ As *al Istiqlal* illustrated in early March, resisting the strangling of the “Arab awakening” by European powers had come to include the hope that “all Islamic countries... will obtain complete independence,” and even the notion that “the struggle of every nation is to get rid of the chains of slavery.” It was increasingly for this universal struggle for complete independence that “the Arabs are determined at whatever sacrifice to attain.”²⁰⁶ *Al Istiqlal* reported in the same month that such sentiments were reciprocated from abroad, with Gandhi himself including the withdrawal of Indian troops from Arab regions, the end of the French occupation of Syria and the establishment of independent governments in Palestine and Iraq among his conditions for ending the non-cooperation in India.²⁰⁷

In January 1922, *al Dijlah* celebrated the creation of the Irish Free State as a victory in such struggles, wryly puzzling over the Anglo-Irish decision to include the

²⁰³ *Lisan al Arab*, February 27, 1922.

²⁰⁴ *al Iraq*, January 13, 1922.

²⁰⁵ *al Dijlah*, March 5, 1922.

²⁰⁶ *al Istiqlal*, March 5, 1922.

²⁰⁷ *al Istiqlal*, March 14, 1922.

word 'Free' for, "we know of no instance in which a State is so called" anywhere else in the world. "Ireland," *al Dijlah*'s editor commented, "has done what is worthy of pride" and "her case bares a certain resemblance to what has happened in our country."²⁰⁸ In February, *al Dijlah* described a far east in recent transformation with the "rise of China and Japan" as European empires obliterated one another, noting that their growth had

modified the severity of colonizing nations whose policy has also changed greatly. Formerly if they wanted to occupy any country they would openly colonize it, but now seeing that the East awakens from her deep sleep they adopt more ingratiating words such as friendship, etc. Time will bring wonders.²⁰⁹

Unsurprisingly, the Iraqi press was particularly affected by the Anglo-Egyptian settlement in March 1922.²¹⁰ *al Dijlah* emphasized the "brotherly feeling" between the Egyptian monarch and Faysal as well as their "mutual recognition of the independence of both Arab states," with "Iraq [being] the first nation to recognize the independence of Egypt." The writer then followed with a point-by-point account by which the Egyptians earned their independence through the formation of political parties and by which "Britain learnt a lesson in politics and has begun to show leniency to weak nations."²¹¹ *Al Rafidan* traced the path even further back, beginning with the education of Egyptian students in Europe, which *al Istiqlal* had been enjoining Iraqis to organize from the fall of 1920.²¹² Noting the detachment of the United States from England, Greece from Turkey, and the liberation of Poland, *al Istiqlal* argued that the Arabs had also risen, "their blood covered the Hijaz, Syria, Egypt, and the Iraq," in reference to the Arab

²⁰⁸ *al Dijlah*, February 8, 1922.

²⁰⁹ *al Dijlah*, February 13, 1922.

²¹⁰ For a consideration of the impact by the Baghdad Residency, see Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 7 for April 1, 1922. NA, CO/730/21

²¹¹ *al Dijlah*, March 21, 1922.

²¹² *al Rafidan*, March 21, 1922.

Revolt, 1920 rising, and the Egyptian Revolution.²¹³ For *al Rafidan*, the clear advancement of indigenous nationalism at the expense of imperial power heralded the opening of a “democratic era” or an “Era of Nationalism” of which the events “in Egypt, India, and awakened Arab countries” were proof.²¹⁴ *Al Dijlah* and *al Mufid* argued that, by comparison, Iraq was, in fact, at the forefront of the awakening, having advanced remarkable quickly and effectively compared with Ireland and Egypt.²¹⁵

In April 1922, prominent Shi’a *ulema* called for a national conference in Karbala ostensibly to address the government’s failure to adequately deal with the problem of the Akhwan raiding parties coming over Iraq’s southern border from Arabia. The Residency held no illusions about the meeting’s potential to rally ‘extreme nationalist’ sentiment against the mandate and, according to the press, made every effort to prevent the conference.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, “all the leading people” from Mosul to Basra, over 2,000 attendants according to *al Dijlah*,²¹⁷ were gathered on April 13 to hear pledges of Iraqi unity and loyalty to the nation in stirring speeches Iraqi politicians, scholars, and clerics alike.²¹⁸ As Cox himself reported to Churchill, the Karbala Conference of April 1922 was a key moment in bringing the Iraqi “people into the open and dividing them into pro-British or pro-Mandate and converse.”²¹⁹

²¹³ *al Istiqlal* March 24, 1922.

²¹⁴ *al Rafidan*, April 05, 1922.

²¹⁵ *al Dijlah*, April 20, 1922 and *al Mufid*, April 17, 1920.

²¹⁶ *al Rafidan*, April 05, 1922 (117) and *al Istiqlal*, April 07, 1922.

²¹⁷ *al Dijlah*, April 16, 1922.

²¹⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 9 May 1, 1922.

²¹⁹ Cox to Churchill May 04, 1922. NA, CO/730/21/425.

One aspect of the “Mesopotamian Mystery” articles in the *Times* in the fall of 1921 that nearly every Iraqi paper took issue with was the suggestion that British officials sympathetic with Arab nationalist aspirations, specifically Cox’s political secretary Gertrude Bell, had in fact created nationalist sentiment where none had previously existed. Writing for *al Istiqlal* in February 1922, Shaikh Ahmad ad Daud, recently returned from his exile by the British for his role in the 1920 risings, commented that, “all thinking Arabs are in favour of and anticipate the inevitable unity of Arab countries.” Bell, he insisted, was held in high esteem by Iraqi Arabs for having been “one of the first to believe in Arab policy and union,” but certainly not for creating it.²²⁰ Shaikh Daud followed his article up a few days later revisiting the origins of the 1920 rising as both anti-colonialist and nationalist.²²¹ *Lisan al Arab* followed suit the same day, defending “liberal English writers who are well acquainted with the spirit of the Arab movement and the reasons which moved Great Britain to support it” and rejecting “the false charge that the Arab movement was engineered by the Oriental secretariat.” The “awakening of the Arabs and their desire to liberate their country,” the writer argued, “like that of other vital nations in history” was entirely home-grown.²²²

Turning to the Iraqi people to demonstrate the veracity of such claims, the Iraqi press gave great emphasis to the fact that the clearest representation of genuine national identification as well as political maturity was not revolution, but voting. “Freedom,” argued Shaikh Daud in *al Iraq* in November 1921, “is the daughter of mental and spiritual progress,” and it was the duty of Iraqis to engage in the practice of not only complaining about their political situation, but working to change it through voting and

²²⁰ *al Iraq*, February 25, 1922.

²²¹ *al Iraq*, February 27, 1922.

²²² *Lisan al Arab*, February 27, 1922.

the organization of political associations.²²³ Despite the enjoinder of the press to participate, the turnout was lower than expected. However, as Hilmi explained in an article in *Lisan al Arab* entitled “There is no Democracy in the World,” such was also the case in France where “only 27% of voters give their votes.” However, “such indifference,” he warned, “kills democracy” and he enjoined his readers to take more interest in the coming elections that summer.²²⁴ Despite Hilmi’s disappointment, however, the Residency still complained that the municipal elections held that January had proven a real opportunity for “extreme nationalists” to get what they referred to as “representatives of the people,” but the Residency identified as early opponents of the mandate, into local offices.²²⁵

In the wake of the spring municipal elections that February 1922, *Lisan al Arab* and *al Istiqlal* spearheaded the movement for the formation of political parties in earnest for the coming elections for Iraq’s first Constituent Assembly that summer. *Lisan al Arab*, the more cautious of the two, argued that parties were necessary to “express the views of the nation and defend its existence,” to keep “the votes of the nation from going astray,” and to give voters the information they needed to “know to whom to give his confidence.”²²⁶ *Al Istiqlal*, which had been permitted to open for publication after a year of closure only days before, “proceeded at once,” according to the Residency, “to sound a clarion note of ultra-Nationalism.”²²⁷ On the day of what would be its second suppression, *al Istiqlal* implied that the recent municipal elections had been illegal, and therefore “a laughing stock” in light of the absence of laws to regulate them, a national

²²³ *al Iraq*, November 22, 1921.

²²⁴ *Lisan al Arab*, January 26, 1922.

²²⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 28, for January 1, 1922.

²²⁶ *Lisan al Arab*, February 17, 1922. (56)

²²⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 05 for February 02, 1922.

council to organize them, political parties to direct the people, and the freedom for those parties to meet and demonstrate. “None of these principles, in short,” the writer argued, presently “exist... if we want legal elections these obstacles must be removed.”²²⁸ *Al Djlal* agreed with *al Istiqlal* in a leader entitled “knowledge allays surprise” arguing for a “more active political fight more in line with the noble heroes of the military fight now past and placid.”²²⁹

Although Cox “agreed in principle that there must be liberty to form parties,” the Residency was deeply suspicious of them.²³⁰ By March, however, the Residency had to report that “the burning question of the hour is that of the creation of political parties.”²³¹ Facing the inevitable, Cox pushed the Council of Ministers to consider methods of legally regulating the formation of parties in a manner that would permit him to examine their political programs and membership lists for anything or anyone “incompatible with the policy of His Majesty’s Government or with the conditions of the treaty now under negotiation” before approving or denying their formation. He considered, however, that it might be more prudent to defer permission for the formation of parties until after the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty had been got through.²³² The problem, as the Residency repeatedly observed, was that the Iraqi papers most vehemently demanding political parties were also those most opposed to the mandate.²³³ After being shut down for nearly a month, *al Istiqlal* immediately reopened in May 1922 with a series of articles condemning the government’s use of the archaic and anti-democratic Ottoman Press Act and Law for

²²⁸ *al Istiqlal*, February 19, 1922.

²²⁹ *al Djlal*, March 16, 1922.

²³⁰ Cox to Churchill, March 12, 1922. BL, L/P+S/11/212/P1106/1922

²³¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 6 for March 13, 1922. NA, CO/730/20

²³² Cox to Churchill March 12, 1922. BL, L/P+S/11/212/P1106/1922.

²³³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 10, for May 15, 1922. NA, FO/371/7771

Societies to silence the press and obstruct the formation of political parties. Such articles were accompanied by the ubiquitous theme of the mandate being the signing away of any hope of transition out of such an oppressive regime.²³⁴

Iraq's first national election for a Constituent Assembly in mid-1922 would be a defining moment for Iraqi nationalism as well as the Iraqi state and, with no political parties to operate through, the Iraqi press became the main forum for public debate over the key issues. Viewing itself as the main catalyst for unifying public opinion,²³⁵ the press emphasized the issues it desired to see addressed by Iraqi candidates in articles designed to spark public debate and demanding that office seeking Iraqis take a position on them and make that position publicly known. *Al Iraq* and *al Dijlah*, for example, aligned on the principle that "no men of Arab race should be considered as aliens" in Iraq²³⁶ while *Lisan al Arab* took the position that "Iraq will never agree to be ruled by people whom the English themselves consider unable to rule their own countries."²³⁷ *al Rafidan* intervened with a detailed examination of British colonial power hierarchies from the Prime Minister all the way down through British administrative officers and onto indigenous officials in Egypt, India, and Iraq, noting the differences in titles of officers and the imperial labels of "Protectorate, Colony, and Mandate" to illustrate precisely who the British believed were, in fact, capable of ruling themselves and, therefore, might be acceptable officials in Iraq irrespective of race.²³⁸

²³⁴ *al Istiqlal* May 05, 09, and 12, 1922.

²³⁵ Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

²³⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 04, for January 11, 1922. NA, CO/730/19

²³⁷ *Lisan al Arab*, February 1, 1922.

²³⁸ *al Rafidan*, June 21, 1922.

When oil prices began to spike in early 1922, the Iraqi press made oil a political issue, in which nearly every paper argued that “the Iraqi State should develop its oil fields for its own advantage.”²³⁹ *Al Istiqlal* was, characteristically, an early exponent of the notion that British development of Iraqi oil, though important for Iraq, must either be transparently used for the development of the Iraqi state or exposed as imperial exploitation.²⁴⁰ The right of the Iraqi government to assemble an army and defend its own borders was also made an issue by the encroachment of the Arabian Akhwan tribes into southern Iraq. “The Iraqis,” *al Rafidan* warned in April 1922,

will convince the blue eyes which look down on all and undermine the wisdom of the people thinking the Iraq like a bird to be frightened by [the Akhwan]. The Iraq will give him a lesson and he shall see that his excuses are of no avail. We will repeat the doings of the Egyptians.²⁴¹

The failure of the Residency or the Palace to defend the southern tribes from Arabian encroachment *al Dijlah*, *al Mufid*, and *al Istiqlal* all agreed, was but a ploy to prove that Iraq was in danger from outside encroachment and did indeed require the presence of British forces.²⁴² When the British government finally settled a treaty with Ibn Saud in the summer of 1922, the agreement elicited “a virulent anti-mandate campaign... in the extreme nationalist press” taking objection to the arrangement by a ‘third-party’ of Iraq’s foreign relations as a mockery of her independence. The Residency anticipated that the “sharp definition” the agreement had given to “political antagonisms” generally was “likely to increase rabidly in bitterness.”²⁴³

At the heart of nearly every political issue under debate in the spring and summer

²³⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 04, for February 14, 1922.

²⁴⁰ *al Istiqlal*, February 21, 1922.

²⁴¹ *al Rafidan*, April 02, 1922.

²⁴² *al Dijlah*, April 11, 1922; *al Mufid*, April 11, 1922, and *al Istiqlal* May 23, 1922.

²⁴³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11 for June 01, 1922.

of 1922 was the matter of British influence over Iraqi independence. Getting right to that heart, *al Mufid* plainly stated in early May that all “candidates should be frank and should either support the Mandate or complete independence, so that the people may be able to elect whom they require.”²⁴⁴ A few weeks later, *al Mufid* made the matter even plainer in declaring that “the elections should be on the basis of acceptance of the Mandate or its rejection,” noting that “all the papers... *Istiqlal*, *Rafidan*, *Dijlha*” were unified in their opposition to it.²⁴⁵ Nor were the Iraqis alone, as *Istiqlal* pointed out,

all the Arab press is harping on the same thing vide Egypt and Syria where the mandate is refused, Palestine which refuses to accept the Balfour Declaration. Tunis and Algeria are demanding national rights, Tripoli demands Italian evacuation. Here the papers ask for the elections and political parties and removal of martial law.²⁴⁶

The Residency was keenly aware of the division of Iraqi political life into the dwindling camp of pro-British clients and the swelling ranks of anti-mandate agitators. That May, a counter-attack was launched against the vernacular press with the Residency’s most recent experiment in Arabic language propaganda, a government gazette entitled *Baghdad Times*. The mandate, *Baghdad Times* insisted, was “not the abrogation of... Iraqi independence... but an international guarantee of it.” Claims to the contrary in the vernacular press, it was argued, simply misunderstood the mandate principle as well as the fact that Iraq was not, in fact, prepared to stand alone. Inferring that the “complete independence” of Iraq demanded by the “extreme nationalist elements” would mean total evacuation, the *Baghdad Times* suggested that

One has only to read the English newspapers to realize that Great Britain has no wish to retain the Mandate for Iraq (which is an expensive luxury) for one minute longer than necessary. No

²⁴⁴ *al Mufid*, May 09, 1922.

²⁴⁵ *al Mufid*, May 09 and 16, 1922.

²⁴⁶ *al Istiqlal*, May 18, 1922.

one would be more delighted to see the Iraq given complete independence tomorrow than the majority of the heavily taxed British Public.²⁴⁷

On May 23, however, Churchill inadvertently reignited the mandate debate in Iraq by responding to a Parliamentary inquiry as to whether the Iraqi people had, in fact, rejected the mandate in Iraq with a simple “No, Sir.”²⁴⁸ *Al Istiqlal* seized the moment to take up the gauntlet thrown down by the *Baghdad Times* with a series of articles disparaging the inaccurate and insulting reportage on the election debates over the mandate in Iraq and condemning British intentions with examples from its own imperial struggles. In an article entitled “Why?” *al Istiqlal* rhetorically inquiring,

Why has Mustapha Kemal urged battle... why has Egypt sacrificed so much in money and lives... why has Gandhi urged his countrymen to wake up and was he thrown into the bottommost prison... why did Shahbandar and his colleagues—nay the whole Arab Syrian population—rise and protest against oppressions through the French mandate... why has Palestine urged dispatch of delegates... why has Iraq awakened and set up to work?

The answers were self-evident in their relation to British imperial policy toward those nations, but amounted to Britain’s betrayal of her aims for the First World War, being “the pretense of restoring mulcted rights and liberating small nations” and now being engaged in the endeavor “to kill the spirit of independence and the ideas of liberty which have just started spreading among the weak nations in particular.”²⁴⁹ *Al Mufid* elaborated with an article quoting newspapers from Syria, Palestine, Tunis and others “full of news of the national movement in Iraq... all comments are favorable... and uphold the Iraq cause... in a spirit of co-operation... among all Arabs.”²⁵⁰

The *Baghdad Times* responded with a profoundly pedantic article entitled “Plain Talk” signed “Old England” and addressed to “Young Arab” that directly targeted the dangerous political immaturity of the Iraqi press. The article began with a criticism of

²⁴⁷ *Baghdad Times*, May 26, 1922.

²⁴⁸ *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 23 May 1922 vol. 154 cc.995

²⁴⁹ *al Istiqlal*, June 20, 1922.

²⁵⁰ *al Mufid*, June 6, 1922.

Iraqi journalists as “new to the game of political journalism and unhampered by traditions,” as compared to the British who, in such publications as *Baghdad Times*, “stick to facts... and avoid abuse, libel, and mud-slinging in general.” Similarly, whereas ‘Old England’ represented a global people, dealing with most of the worlds nations, weak and powerful, on a daily basis, ‘Young Arab’ had little knowledge of international relations and obligations or even the management of a state and, characteristically, was handling her relationship with the British immaturity. If Iraq was progressing too slowly for the taste of the vernacular press, the *Baghdad Times* argued, it was not the fault of England, but of Iraqis themselves. “If you really are patriotic,” the writer insisted, instead of abusing the Britisher, why not devote yourselves for a short while to the task of helping the British to defend your country... it would be so much more useful than wasting your time in the coffee-shops abusing the Government and the British and the weather and so forth.”²⁵¹

Despite these efforts to counter anti-mandate propaganda, by May 1922, Cox and Churchill alike seemed to have become convinced that the democratic route to procuring an Anglo-Iraqi Treaty from an Arab Iraqi government was collapsing. Since April, Cox had been reporting that nationalist agitations against the Treaty had either broken Faysal’s will to cooperate or been the result of his own secret machinations to thwart the mandate relationship entirely. Either way, Cox reported, “in these recent episodes [Faysal has] unmistakably displayed the cloven hoof... when he is scratched deep enough the racial weakness displays itself.”²⁵² As a means of forcing Faysal’s hand and delivering a *fait accompli* to Iraqi nationalist sentiment, Cox proposed in late April that

²⁵¹ *Baghdad Times*, July 12, 1922.

²⁵² Cox to Churchill April 26, 1922. NA, CO/730/21/19083

an ultimatum be delivered to Faysal to either approve the Treaty without the abrogation of the mandate or face immediate evacuation. It is significant that Cox believed the ultimatum would have the “greatest value and effect” if delivered as an official response to a staged Parliamentary question in London, rather than merely an announcement in Baghdad.²⁵³ Once the announcement made it through Reuters and back to Baghdad, the terms of the treaty and evacuation would become clear to the public, the force of the threat would be amplified in coming from Parliament, and the opposition would be discredited.²⁵⁴ Although initially approved by Churchill, the plan was not carried through, in the main, as Churchill explained, because of the backlash such a contest would have elicited in Britain. “Strong public opposition to our spending money on Iraq,” he warned, “would be revived if there were any indication that negotiations were breaking down.” The result of such an announcement, Churchill predicted, would “almost certainly be, in present temper of British public, a demand for reduction of British commitments in Iraq.”²⁵⁵ Meaning they would get evacuation whether they wanted it or not.

By the end of May, however, key pro-British elements in the tribal leadership and their representatives in municipal posts seemed to be swaying toward an anti-Treaty position.²⁵⁶ Declarations of “the undying opposition which the Iraq nation entertained to the mandate” signed by important tribal sheikhs began to appear in the press as well, along with the suggestion that Faysal had secretly confirmed his and his Council’s adversity to the Mandate. Although Faysal denied making such statements to Cox, he

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ Cox to Churchill April 26, 1922. NA, CO/730/21/19083

²⁵⁵ Churchill to Cox, May 5, 1922. NA, CO/730/21

²⁵⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 10 for May 15, 1922. NA, FO/371/7771

nevertheless refused to permit a public retraction.²⁵⁷ Inspired by the lead from the Palace, anti-Treaty activists undertook to send “rs. 1,500 worth of telegrams to the League of Nations, parliaments and press of Europe and America, as well as the President of the United States of America” declaring Iraqi opposition to any Treaty the British might attempt to force upon them. When the Residency held the telegrams up, the senders published them in the vernacular press and then drove them to Persia to publish them from there.²⁵⁸ Telegrams and petitions protesting against the mandate were also pouring in from the provinces addressed to Cox, the Naqib, and other officials while ‘extremist agitators’ encouraged the *ulema* of Nejef and Karbala to pronounce a *fatwa* against the British and the mandate.²⁵⁹ By June, such *fatwas* had in fact been declared,²⁶⁰ to the alarm of Churchill, who began to demand that the Residency immediately move to halt the progression of the already “objectionable tone of the vernacular press” into such an “exceedingly violent” phase.²⁶¹

Matters came to a head in mid-August when Faysal’s Cabinet presented the beleaguered King with its own ultimatum out of fear that the onus of either passing a treaty that would be unacceptable to the Iraqi people or triggering British evacuation would fall on their heads. “Signs of disintegration in the country due to a lack of common purpose in the Government,” the Cabinet argued, “and consequent lack of uniformity in the manner in which Government officials conducted affairs under pressure from extremists” had given the popular perception, voiced by “the extremists that His Majesty placed no reliance on the Cabinet and was not working in harmony with it” in forwarding

²⁵⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12, for May 29, 1922 NA, FO/371/7771

²⁵⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12, for May 29, 1922 NA, FO/371/7771

²⁵⁹ Cox to Churchill, June 28, 1922. NA, CO/730/22/735

²⁶⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 16 for July 29, 1922. NA, FO/371/7771

²⁶¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 13, for June 26, 1922. NA, FO/371/7771

the treaty negotiations. When Faysal informed them that he did not feel a public declaration of support from him was necessary, the Cabinet submitted its resignation on August 14.²⁶² A few days later, on Faysal's first anniversary as King, Cox was ridiculed as he passed by a gathering outside the Palace assembled to hear nationalist speeches disguised as celebratory odes to Faysal, to the roaring mirth of the crowd.²⁶³ Although Faysal promised to give his signature to the public apology and disassociation from the comments Cox demanded, the High Commissioner was, by then, convinced that only the force of an ultimatum backed by the real threat of evacuation could force the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty desired by his government through, plans for which he put in motion on August 25.²⁶⁴

In an amazing stroke of luck or fate, Faysal was struck down by appendicitis on August 26. Two hours before Faysal was to enter the surgery, on what he seemed to believe might be his death bed, Cox approached him with a public declaration for his signature declaring his disassociation with the extreme nationalist elements for immediate publication, a document that would, for all intents and purposes amount to Faysal's declaration of support for the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. Refusing to make the condemnation of any of his subjects his last act as King, Faysal refused to sign a statement that, he believed would more likely "to produce revolution than stop it."²⁶⁵ Seizing the moment of Faysal's incapacity, Cox immediately issued a proclamation taking over the reigns of government and called for the suppression of nearly every Arabic vernacular in publication and the arrest or deportation of the most troublesome editors and agitators.

²⁶² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 16, August 14, 1922. *NA, FO/371/7772*

²⁶³ Cox to Churchill August 23, 1922. *NA, CO/730/24/282*.

²⁶⁴ For correspondence on this between Cox and Churchill, see *NA, CO/730/24/168-174*.

²⁶⁵ Cox to Churchill August 26, 1922. *NA/CO/730/24/42829/185-6*

He then arranged for the verbal approval of Faysal's Cabinet for the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty with the stipulation that it would also require the ratification of the Constituent Assembly upon its election and received Churchill's approval in turn. In recovery, Faysal was presented with a choice to either give his public support to Cox's actions and approve the progression of Treaty ratification by the Constituent Assembly or publically condemn them and face Cox's immediate retirement and the beginning of British evacuation from Iraq. On October 2, a new Cabinet was formed under the Naqib for the sole purpose of ratifying the Treaty, which they did on October 10, with Faysal's approval, but also with the stipulation that only the Iraqi people could formally approve the Treaty through an elected National Assembly.

Chapter 6: Defining the Instruments of the Iraqi Government in the Shadow of the ‘Mosul Question.’

Cox’s short-lived *coup d’état* over the waylaid Faysal may have succeeded in wringing the signatures of his Cabinet for the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, but such was merely the first step in the odyssey of ratification that would occupy the Baghdad Residency for the next four years. As subsequent events would show, the dramatic demonstration of British dominance in the Anglo-Iraqi nation-making project evinced by the move would gain only the most fragile and, for many Iraqi editors, irrelevant foothold in achieving the kind of treaty desired by the British government. From the summer of 1922 to the spring of 1926, the Iraqi press would dedicate itself to refuting the legitimacy of a treaty drafted by the British and coercively validated by a British appointed Cabinet and King by attending to every detail of the process of electing an Iraqi Constituent Assembly, drafting Iraqi instruments of government, and negotiating a new treaty reflective of Iraqi interests that only a popularly elected representative assembly could, in the end, legally ratify into being. The most effective weapons in the Iraqi press’ arsenal would be the history of European constitutionalism itself and the baseline expectations for constitutional development among Britons, the international community, and, most importantly for the press’ political agenda, the Iraqi people.

In addition to illustrating the contradiction between the appearance of constitutional progress in Iraq and the reality of British imperial dominance, the manner in which the Treaty was initially signed also brought home for the Iraqi press the real necessity of such appearances for the British government. Historians have rightly identified British obligations to the League of Nations, the advantages in inter-imperial relations with Turkey and France in particular, the need to reduce the financial

obligations of the Iraqi mandate caused by anti-mandate agitation, and the need to protect Faysal's legitimacy as the head of the Iraqi state as central concerns for supporters of the Treaty in the British government.¹ For the Iraqi press, however, the Residency's seemingly desperate need to present the Anglo-Iraqi relationship in a genuinely constitutional light in spite of the baldly imperial manner in which that relationship was being imposed also illustrated the potential power of the Iraqi street to decry its legitimacy. That power was amplified, Iraqi editors were learning, by desire of a growing section of the British public to expose the mandate relationship for the anachronistic imperial adventure they believed it to be and, in so doing, force its dissolution.

The path from the signing of the Treaty in Iraq in 1922 to its final ratification in 1926 presented a series of legislative steps and popular elections that provided the Iraqi press with ample opportunity to challenge the constitutional legitimacy of Iraqi political development and to mobilize the Iraqi public in favor of a governmental system more in line with international standards for democracy as they perceived and chose to define them. The swiftness with which Iraqis of every political stripe adapted to and mastered the limiting parameters imposed by the Residency on Iraq's developing political landscape, with the daily assistance of the Iraqi press, kept British officials scrambling to contain the evolution of national political movements out of arguments about democracy and constitutionalism appearing first in the Iraqi press in which the legitimacy of the

¹ See, for example, the classic works by Philip Willard Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), pp. 313-318 and Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), pp. 68-73; as well as more recent work by Toby Dodge, "International Obligation, Domestic Pressure, and Colonial Nationalism: The Birth of the Iraqi State Under the Mandate System," in *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives/ Les Mandats Français et Anglais Dans Une Perspective Comparative*, ed. Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglett (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 143-164.

Treaty was a central issue. The path to ratification was also fraught with such unanticipated obstacles as Mustafa Kemal's bid to reclaim the petroliferous Iraqi *vilayet* of Mosul for Turkey and the bewildering entertainment of such claims by the League of Nations as well as the political upset of British Labour's victory over Stanley Baldwin's incumbent Conservative government in the fall of 1923, all of which the Iraqi press attempted to turn to maximum advantage.

This chapter seeks to show that the Anglo-Iraqi legislation and ratification of the Iraqi constitution, electoral laws, and international treaties defining the state were not merely the products of a contest of wills between the Palace and the Residency, but rather the products of a transnational debate in the British and Iraqi press and Parliaments in which the nature of modern democracy and constitutionalism was at the center. Through an examination of the coverage of developments in the Iraqi press, I am able to show a constant engagement with the principles in play that offered the Iraqi public definitive proof that the British were constructing a quasi-protectorate and not a quasi-state, the intellectual tools they needed to develop an alternative vision for the Iraqi nation based on international standards, and the inspiring examples of parallel liberation movements ongoing throughout the British Empire and even at its center to emulate and even aspire to lead. In the end, the Residency and the British government would ultimately succeed in obtaining the possession of Mosul, the retention of the mandate, and the mineral and political concessions they desired from the international, metropolitan, and Iraqi political systems they grappled with from 1922 to 1926. Nevertheless, securing the national borders and political framework for Iraq was a difficult and only partially won contest between the dwindling power of imperial interests and the rapidly expanding power of

public opinion in international and inter-imperial politics. For, the failure of both British Labour and Iraqi nationalists to block the formal creation of a quasi-protectorate in Iraq through the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1926 was also only a partial failure, in which crucial political gains would eventually culminate in the overturning of the hated Treaty under a second Labour government in 1929 and the emancipation of Iraq from British rule in 1932.

Along with the purging of seditious publications and arrest of extremist agitators in the summer of 1922, the Residency also permitted the licensing of Iraq's first political party, the Hisb al Hurr.² Unlike most members of the "pro-Arab party," as the Residency collectively referred to advocates for 'complete independence' from British rule, Hisb al Hurr members were considered to have, "for the most part, vested interests in the country" in terms of property, wealth, and prestige and, therefore, represented "pro-Arab conservative interests." For the Residency, 'conservative' interests meant an investment in "the maintenance of constitutional government with British advice and support" that had galvanized the power of Iraq's landowning and business elite under the occupation.³ Permitting the formation of the Hisb al Hurr, in other words, placed a group of already influential Iraqis inclined to support the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty relationship against the criticisms of more extreme pro-Arab activists at the forefront of Iraq's emerging popular

² Rafail Butti describes the Hisb al Hurr as precedent setting in both its early licensing as well as its publication of its own paper, *al Asimah*. See Rafail Butti, *Al-Sihafah Fi Al-'Iraq: Muhadarat Alqaha* (Bulaq: Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyyah, 1955), p. 77

³ For a consideration of land distribution and British use of the tribal system to the Residency's advantage, see Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003), pp. 63-83 and especially pp. 101-130. For a discussion of the relationship between the tribal and the political elite under the mandate, see David Pool, "From Elite to Class: The Transformation of Iraqi Leadership, 1920-1939," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 3 (November 1980): 331-350.

political landscape. Although precisely the sort of political grouping the Residency needed to begin the difficult work of electing governmental bodies acceptable to Iraqis, but also amenable to approving instruments of government acceptable to the British, they also feared that domestic and international developments were quickly eroding the middle ground on which Hisb al Hurr members stood.⁴

Like A.T. Wilson before him, Cox was unsettlingly unable to give his political clients in Iraq definitive guarantees about the future of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship and, therefore, their future positions of power in relation to the Sherifian court, the rising fervor of 'extreme nationalism,' or, as of late September 1922, the threat of the return of Turkish rule in Iraq. For, in the immediate wake of his expulsion of the occupying Allied forces from Turkey and reclamation of Smyrna from the Greeks in mid-September,⁵ Turkish President Mustafa also made known his intentions of reclaiming the entire Mosul *vilayet* for his emerging Republic of Turkey.⁶ Compounding this external threat to Iraq's territorial sovereignty was the growing clamor for the evacuation of Iraq emanating out of London, now that Lloyd George's reckless insistence on upholding the 'Secret Treaties' was, so it seemed, leading to renewed international war just as UDC and ILP propaganda had been predicting since the war's end. In the face of the threat of British

⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 22, for November 15, 1922. NA, FO/371/7772

⁵ For a discussion of the negative impact of Turkey's victory over the Greeks in the conflict over Smyrna on the Lloyd George administration, who had stalwartly supported the Greeks, see Othman Ali, "The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 522 and G. H. Bennet, *British Foreign Policy during the Curzon Period, 1919-1924* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), Chapter 5.

⁶ For a discussion of the impact of Mustafa Kemal's revolution on British policy in the Middle East, see A.E. Montgomery, "The Making of the Treaty of Sevres of 10 August 1920," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 15, No. 4 (December 1972): pp. 775-787. For a discussion of Turkish claims to Mosul in a context of international relations, see Peter J. Beck, "A Tedious and Perilous Controversy: Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926.," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.17, No.2 (1981): 256-276. For a contemporaneous discussion specifically of the legal status of Mosul in relation to international law and the mandates, see Berriedale A. Keith, "The League of Nations and Mosul," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law, 3rd Ser.* Vol.8, No.1 (1926): 38-49.

evacuation, as the Residency summarized it, the ‘conservative element’ represented by the Hisb al Hurr faced either the advent of “an extremist and possibly unstable nationalist Government” not only vulnerable to internal and external threats, but already inclined to disempower the ‘conservative element’ represented by the Hisb al Hurr, or, if Iraq was “returned to the dominion of Turkey,” the Hisb member’s identification with the British would surely mean the loss of their future livelihood, if not their lives.⁷ Even as the Residency collected these observations, the Minister of the Interior and a leading ‘moderate’ in Faysal’s Cabinet Abdul Mushin Beg al Sa’dun already seemed to be succumbing to pressure from the ‘extremist element,’ submitting his resignation on the grounds that “the present Cabinet does not represent the people of Iraq and that it is generally considered as being of British manufacture.”⁸

With a signed Treaty and opposition ostensibly shut down, however, Cox and the Residency seemed to enjoy the advantage of having only the usually pro-British *al Iraq* and the official organ of the Hisb al Hurr, *al Asimah* in publication in Baghdad as Faysal proclaimed the commencement of elections for the Constituent Assembly in the early fall of 1922. *Al Iraq* took as moderate an attitude toward the recent approval of the Treaty as the Residency could have hoped for in pointing out in late October that, although “not wholly satisfying all our demands and national rights,” the Treaty relationship was but a temporary one “necessary in order to attain our goal and satisfy our national demands... which will make us worthy to demand our legitimate rights from the civilized world.” In the same issue of *al Iraq*, the Hisb al Hurr published its manifesto, which considered the

⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 22, for November 15, 1922. NA, FO/371/7772

⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 22, for November 15, 1922. NA, FO/371/7772
For a consideration of the relationship between Faysal and the Cabinet as well as the Cabinet’s perception of its popular legitimacy at this moment, see ‘Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat Al-Iraqiyah* (Sayda: Matba’at al-‘Irfan, 1953), pp. 100-110 and especially p. 110.

Treaty “the first step of an awakening nation to restore its glory.”⁹ The key to that restoration, both papers argued, was to demonstrate, not to merely to the British or Iraqi people, but to the world that Iraqis were a politically engaged and mature people worthy of independence. “The civilized world to-day,” *al Asimah* argued in its first edition,

judges the claim of all nations to participate in a living progress by the extent of their appreciation of the benefits of the franchise and a nation which realizes its fundamental right provides the clearest evidence of its fitness to a place on the forefront of the nations of the world.¹⁰

al Iraq as well urged not only political participation, but a program of national politicization calling upon Iraqis with legal, agricultural, and administrative training to run for the Assembly and for Iraqis to put them in office based on those qualifications as a means of subverting the scramble of unqualified position-seekers for offices they were unqualified to fulfill.¹¹ Parents were even encouraged to bring their children to political meetings and voting stations “as is done in Europe so as to accustom them to care for their constitutional rights. All must realize the meaning of independence and national sovereignty.”¹²

Within days of Faysal’s announcement of the elections, however, prominent Shi’a *ulema* in Kadhimain, Karbala, and Najaf responded with *fatwas* forbidding any participation in elections orchestrated by a non-Muslim power.¹³ Though determined to

⁹ *al Iraq*, October 20, 1922.

¹⁰ *al Asimah*, November 5, 1922. Butti argued that *al Asimah* began publication as a means for the Hisb al Hurr to both politically mobilize Iraqis as well as to educate them about the nature of representative electoral political life. See Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 77.

¹¹ *al Iraq*, October 24, 1922.

¹² *al Iraq*, November 1, 1922.

¹³ *Ibid.* Yitzhak Nakash’s *The Shi’is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) offers the most complete consideration of the *fatwas*, arguing that they were a product of the disappointment of the Shi’a *ulema* at Faysal’s failure to promote Shi’a Sunni equality after the *ulema*’s efforts to give Sherifian calls for a nationalist rising in 1920 their support, resulting in the rising of 1920, pp. 79-81. Bashkin has made a similar argument giving more emphasis to Shi’a fears of future political marginalization under a Sunni dominated state in *The Other Iraq*, p. 23.

carry on with the elections despite the unwillingness of many Iraqis to go against the *fatwas*, the Residency was forced to acknowledge the emergence of a more secular expression of their sentiment by December. Through “persuasion and threats... by opponents of the Government” attributed by the Residency to the ‘extreme nationalist’ element in Baghdad, all but around 160 of 500 notables invited to decide upon Baghdad’s electoral committees abstained from attending the meeting. Against motions to carry on with the selection of the committee anyway, Da’ud Sa’di, the “mis-stitched young man” who had been editor of the suppressed *al Dijlah*, according to the Residency, objected to the legality of the move, arguing that the failure of less than half of the electors to appear meant that a quorum had not been reached and the elections could not be legally held. When his protestations were ignored, Sa’di pushed the meeting even further from a quorum by walking out and taking around half of the electors with him. When the Cabinet attempted to classify Sa’di’s protest as unlawful interference in the electoral process, it was the Hisb al Hurr that came to his defense, lodging a formal protest, published in *al Asimah*, condemning the “Government’s desire to use force to proceed with the elections, which is contrary to Law,” by which the writer was referring to the very Electoral Law drafted by British advisors.¹⁴ In reply to the Ministry of Interior’s “temperate rejoinder” to the protest, published in *al Iraq*, *al Asimah* reminded its readers that the *fatwas* forbidding participation in the election themselves did not stem from mere ‘Shi’a backwardness, but from the fear that the British intended to hoist the “iron fetters” of an unrepresentative Assembly on Iraq and ‘strangle its independence’ from within. In formally retracting its support for the elections as a party, Hisb al Hurr warned the

¹⁴ See *al Asimah* December 27, 1922 and *al Iraq*, December 28, 1922.

government that “the whole nation is determined to refuse participation in elections unless they prove by action that they will realize the aspirations of the people.”¹⁵

Such opposition only increased over the fall and into 1923, as the Residency noted in January, with threatening letters and public postings emanating out of nationalist enclaves like the Supreme Committee of the Secret Societies of Iraq became more common and threatening “to reject the Anglo-Iraq Treaty... overturn the present Cabinet and replace it by one composed of extreme Nationalists ‘in whom the nation has trust,’... remove all advisors and bring about the severance of relations between King Faisal and the Colonial Office.”¹⁶ Despite the efforts of the Residency to push through with the elections regardless, such opposition would continue to obstruct their completion until February 1924.

One explanation for the drift of the *Hisb al Hurr* and *al Asimah* toward an ‘extremist’ position, and the enlivening of the opposition in Iraq to elections they perceived as being unfairly influenced by the British or pro-British elements in Iraq,¹⁷ can be found in political developments in Great Britain. For the British were also engaged in a popular election in the fall of 1922 and the advent of the Conference at Lausanne that November to forge a settlement between the Turkish and Allied governments, and in particular to refute Turkey’s claims to the Iraqi territory of Mosul, had become a

¹⁵ *al Asimah*, December 29, 1922.

¹⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 02, for January 15, 1923. NA, fo/371/9009

¹⁷ The focus of most historians of this period on the negotiations with Faysal over the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty or to the *fatwas* have generally overshadowed any attention to perceptions of the constitutionality of the elections addressed in the Iraqi press. See, for example, Sluglett, pp. 75-78, Ireland, pp. 370-390. Dodge, for example, largely ignores the press in Iraq and argues that “From 1923 until 1926 the persistent problem faced by [the Residency]... was how to make use of the two main conduits of influence, the king and the Council of Ministers, without undermining the Iraqi government’s credibility with the population. Relations between [the Residency] and Faysal were crucial.” Dodge, p. 26.

significant election issue.¹⁸ Although the *Daily Telegraph* was correct in identifying, with the British public generally, Mosul as “the one city the possession of which... will decide the fate of the Congress” at Lausanne, the writer was mistaken in assuming the “blank and total incuriosity with which Mosul in its turn regards the Conference.”¹⁹ For as the Residency noted with slight exaggeration that November, the announcement of the Lausanne Conference itself had sparked such a sensation in Iraq as to “almost entirely obliterate... the signing of the Treaty and the preparations for the elections... from the public mind.”²⁰ In fact, *al Iraq*, having got wind of the Turkish claims to Mosul through the *Times of London*, had already been making the case for the inclusion of Mosul in Iraq for weeks.²¹ Even the pro-British *al Iraq*, however, faced the facts of the situation in identifying oil, and not the irrefutable historical, ethnic, linguistic, economic, spiritual, and political ties of the Mosul *vilayet* to Iraq, as the primary factor in the case.²² *Al Asimah* put the matter even more plainly and historically in arguing that “the Arabs do not deserve to become the Poland of the East... We trust that the nations which assemble in Lausanne, and especially Great Britain... will not permit the matter of the frontiers of Iraq to be made a question of bargaining.”²³

It was not merely the international community’s commitment to internationalist principles that concerned the Iraqi press, however, but the commitment of the British people to standing against the return of any part of Iraq to Turkish rule, and for good

¹⁸ Although historians have gestured to the significance of Lausanne to the 1922 general election in Britain, little attention has been paid to the impact of that election on Iraqi sensibilities concerning Anglo-Iraqi relations. See Sluglett, *Britain and Iraq*, pp. 78-79. and Othman Ali, “The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923,” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1997), p. 522.

¹⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, December 19, 1922.

²⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report, No. 22 for November 15, 1922. NA, FO/371/7772

²¹ See, for example, *al Iraq*, November 04, 06, 07, 08, 13, 1922.

²² *al Iraq*, November 8, 1922.

²³ *al Asimah*, November 16, 1922.

reason. Iraqi historian Rafial Butti has argued that from the Iraqi press' attention to the *Times of London* alone, editors could gather a very clear picture of popular attitudes in Britain toward their government's policy in Iraq that reflected a widespread disapproval of both the Treaty and the manner in which it was approved in Iraq as well as a general faltering of support for the continuation of the mandate, though the Residency suspected that the press were in receipt of a far broader set of clippings from British daily newspapers.²⁴ The run up to the conference at Lausanne during the general elections in Britain in the fall of 1922 was especially characterized by a storm of criticism in the British press over policy in the Middle East generally, of which the Labour press was the most penetrating and vehement. By the end of 1922, even *al Iraq* was expressing its concern that High Commissioner Cox undertake his pending mission home to advise the incoming Bonar Law administration as an 'emissary of the Iraqi people' not merely to the British government, but the British people as well. Cox alone, *al Iraq* argued, had come to know "the soul of the Iraqi people" as he observed the profound progress Iraqis had made under extreme circumstances and could, therefore, "explain to the British people the hopes of the Arab nation which desires true independence" as he would "explain to British politicians the true facts of the position of Iraq." That position, *al Iraq* explained, was one of mutual dependence, for just as Iraq "cannot dispense with the help of a powerful nation such as Great Britain... the need which Great Britain has for an alliance with Iraq in order to protect India" must also be understood.²⁵ Cox himself certainly understood the threat evacuation posed for the pro-British element in Iraq, which he conveyed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in January 1923 in requesting that "in

²⁴ Butti dedicates an entire section of his book on the Iraqi press to the *Times of London* and its impact on Iraqi perceptions of the Anglo-Iraqi relationship. See Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 97-100 in particular.

²⁵ *al Iraq*, December 27, 1922.

view of the attitude of the London papers... received here this mail” he might have authorization to “assure Faisal and others here that the purpose of the conference at which my presence is required is to find satisfactory basis for continuance of our task here and not to discuss feasibility of abandoning it.”²⁶

With the general elections culminating in September 1922 amidst the growing threat of war with Turkey, Leonard Woolf raised the specter of oil and oil interests for British voters as a crucial force seeking to shape international politics in its favor.²⁷ Even the United States, “by tradition and... by natural inclination, the least imperialistic... of all great Powers,” according to Woolf, had been engaged in a policy of supporting revolutionary movements in Mexico against every governmental regime since 1916 that attempted to declare the petroleum of Mexico the property of the Mexican nation. American oil cartels, Woolf illustrated, had come to drive the American government into imperialistic policies, “the oil interests have seen that no Mexican Government shall be recognized by the U.S.A. until they get one which will protect the American oil interests.” Where as in America, capitalism was the primary force driving imperialistic policies in Mexico, in Britain, oil was perceived more as “an instrument of military power.” The threat of war was equal to the threat of being denied “control [of] the supplies which alone will make warships move, armies march, and, in the end, guns shoot.” The explanation of the British government’s tenacious refusal to ‘quit

²⁶ Cox to Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 01, 1923. NA, CO/730/37/230.

²⁷ The attention of the Labour movement to oil as a political issue is almost never raised in historical monographs, even in those dealing specifically with Britain’s oil policies during this period. For a typical example, see Charles More, *Black Gold: Britain and Oil in the Twentieth Century* (London: Continuum, 2009), especially pp. 1-68. For a general survey of the role of oil in Anglo-Iraqi relations, see Helmut Mejcher, *Imperial Quest for Oil: Iraq 1910-1928*, St. Antony’s Middle East monographs no. 6 (London: Published for the Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College by Ithaca Press, 1976).

Mesopotamia' despite the threat of war with Turkey it had now generated, was the fact that Mesopotamia was Britain's most promising claim to a permanent supply of oil.²⁸

In the *New Leader* that October, H. N. Brailsford ridiculed Lloyd George's claims to be fighting for the freedom of the Dardanelle Straits and the safety of Christian minorities in formerly Ottoman territories. One could "hardly recognize in this simple minded altruism the habitual mind of Downing Street," Brailsford noted, arguing that, in any event, even in times of peace "it will be easier... to retain the oil of Mosul... when the Sultan looks from his palace window at the muscles of our 15-inch guns... or recover the British oil properties at Baku... if Dreadnoughts may anchor off Batoum."²⁹ As far as Lloyd George's concern for the fate of Christian minorities in Syria and Iraq, Brailsford argued that Turkey was already clamoring for a "re-drawing of the frontiers of our mandated area of Mesopotamia." The obvious solution, he argued, was to insist on an adjustment the frontiers to accommodate ethnic groupings, ceding the Kurdish/Turkish populated areas of Mosul to the Turks in exchange for Turkish concessions of territory to Russian Armenia. "There is just one obstacle," Brailsford pointed out, "there is oil in Mosul." At the heart of the matter was not freedom of the seas or minority rights, Brailsford insisted, but power and "power in the modern world means opportunity for the capital behind it." The real struggle to take place at Lausanne, he concluded, was one of "oil against humanity and power against freedom."³⁰

Drawing from the preceding decade of Labour propaganda, on October 12, two days after the Iraqi Cabinet signed the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, the *Daily Herald* launched a

²⁸ *Foreign Affairs*, September, 1922. *LSE, Morel Papers/F6/22* also see Leonard Woolf, "Proposed Memorandum on the Turkish Conference" October 1922, PHM, LPACIQ, No. 251

²⁹ *The New Leader*, October 06, 1922.

³⁰ *The New Leader*, October 06, 1922.

series entitled “Secret History of the Anglo-Turk Crisis” with its first installment, “The Oil Behind the War Scare,” retelling the story of the Great War with oil interests at the center.³¹ Beginning with the Baghdad Railway agreements of 1903 and progressing to the ‘Sykes-Picot and San Remo Oil Agreements,’ Paris correspondent George Slocombe illustrated how the Allies had all but secured the oil fields they had used the Great War to conquer before the recent interference of American and French oil interests. The Ankara Agreement between France and Turkey, he argued, was merely a strategic move by those countries to wrest control from British backed Shell-Royal Dutch by America’s Standard Oil.³² Labour’s alternative “Plan for Peace,” appearing in the *New Leader* on November 10, included the permanent opening of the Straits to merchant shipping in exchange for their permanent closure to warships, the expansion of the Russian-Armenian territory in exchange for “restoring to [Turkey] Mosul with its oil-bearing lands,” and “a complete withdrawal [of British forces] from Mesopotamia.” “Our seizure of Mesopotamia,” the writer explained, “was forced against the resistance of its Arab population; our ‘mandate’ encounters their mass resistance, and violates the letter of the spirit of the Covenant.”³³

As the Lausanne Conference dragged into 1923 and the elections swung in favor of the Conservatives under Bonar Law, Labour propaganda became even more adamant that the imperial and capitalist interests privileged by Liberal and Conservative British governments alike were, indeed, laying the groundwork for a second world war over the oil of Mosul. The *Daily Herald*, for its part, kept an almost daily account of the progress

³¹ The *Daily Herald* was not the only one taking up this position. For a contemporaneous American author with the same view, see Louis Fischer, *Oil Imperialism: The International Struggle for Petroleum* (New York: International, 1926). For a more recent study of the role of oil in the First World War, see F. William Engdahl, “Oil and the Origins of the Great War,” *History Compass* 5, no. 6 (2007): 2041-2060.

³² *The Daily Herald*, October 12, 1922.

³³ *New Leader*, November 10, 1922.

of the 'oil negotiations' ongoing at Lausanne and beyond, despite the attempts of the Lloyd George and then Bonar Law governments at secrecy, asking in mid-December, for example "why has... the chairman of the Petroleum Committee, been staying here in the same hotel as the British Delegation? And why was the Delegation so anxious that the fact of his presence should not be generally known?"³⁴ *Foreign Affairs* rallied military experts and former commanders to illustrate how the 'freedom of the Straits' was merely code for British freedom to "coerce Turkey, Russia, or Bulgaria in the Sea of Marmora or the Black Sea whenever it may suit her."³⁵ Worse still, British governments responsible for these preparations were no longer acting in the interests of either people or party, but directed like marionettes by "the whole sinister force of International finance" that had transformed Constantinople into "the centre of financial intrigue and ill-feeling between the... Western Powers" in the years leading up to the First World War and now into the postwar period. The irony that Turkey alone had formally recognized "the complete independence of the Arab States" while Europe still clung to 'so-called mandates' and 'obsolete treaties' with "no validity whatever in International law" was not lost on the Labour press.³⁶ In characteristically plain language, the ILP announced in its 1923 "Manifesto on the Near East," that "THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IS AGAIN DRAWING US STRAIGHT INTO WORLD WAR." In opposition to the policy of 'forced dispossession' under "our so-called Peace Treaties," the ILP "supported the recognition of [indigenous] rights" which it declared "as sacred as our own." The authors enjoined "the people to work for the political victory" of British Labour which "will HURL THIS GOVERNMENT FROM POWER" and provide for a "CONFERENCE OF

³⁴ *Daily Herald*, December 18, 1922, see also *Daily Herald*, December 01, 08, 11, 18, 1922.

³⁵ *Foreign Affairs* December, 1922.

³⁶ *Foreign Affairs* December, 1922.

ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD FROM WHICH THERE SHALL BE NO EXCLUSIONS.”³⁷

Nor were these merely hollow declarations. At the recommendation of the Labour Party Advisory Committee on International Questions, Labour Party representatives Charles Buxton and George Young circumvented the British delegates at Lausanne and met with the Turkish representative themselves on January 3, 1923. Armed with a “*modus vivendi*” defining Labour’s terms for Anglo-Turkish relations in detail, Buxton and Young were granted a meeting with Turkish delegate Ismet Pasha “immediately on arrival” at Lausanne to arrange “a personal understanding with him which would justify us in recommending to our party leaders to enter into direct relations with the delegation on a rupture becoming inevitable.” When Ismet Pasha inquired whether a minority party could secure Parliamentary approval of their ‘understanding,’ Buxton and Young replied that, if Ismet could “reassure humanitarian sentiment” in Britain by accepting their terms, Labour “would take the responsibility of stopping a war with Turkey” if present negotiations fell apart. Although receptive to their overtures, Ismet admitted, and vindicated Labour’s position somewhat, that “if the Conference failed the quickest and cheapest road to peace might be by war.” He welcomed the opening of dialogue with Labour leaders, however, as an alternative to war should that situation arise and agreed to keep those channels open which, “in any case,” Buxton and Young pointed out, “will enable them to claim that the Party had done all it could with that object.”³⁸

³⁷ *The Near East: Independent Labour Party Manifesto*, 1923. LSE, ILP/S/1923/46.

³⁸ LPACIQ Memo 270 PHM 1923 01 02

Editorials and articles in the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* defended and even celebrated Lord Curzon's "crushing demolition of Ismet's arguments" over Turkey's claims to Mosul at the conference as "almost cruel in its logic and in its humor"³⁹ and criticized Turkey's case as characterized by "simple ignorance and inability to understand the issues in question."⁴⁰ For Labour writers, however, Curzon's arguments about Mosul's cultural, historical, linguistic, and economic homogeneity with the rest of Iraq were not only erroneous, but irrelevant. For it was not the identifications or preferences of rule of the inhabitants, but what lay "under the Kurdish villages... which endear Mosul to Lord Curzon."⁴¹ The invasion of the Ruhr by France that January, and the failure of the British government to challenge that invasion, played directly into Labour's critique.⁴² For, according to the *New Leader*, in the tradition of Anglo-French *quid pro quo*, "it is because Downing Street is grabbing oil, that it dare not stop the French from grabbing the coal [of the Ruhr]." The brazenness of the French invasion, however, only served as a reminder, for Brailsford, of the responsibility of the British people and Labour in particular to reign in the policy of its own government. The first step in influencing policy internationally, he argued, was for the British people to "insist on the evacuation, not of Cologne, but of Mosul." Only when the British people had "made our own Government understand that not all the oil of Mosul will reconcile us to the ruin of Europe will it be time to consider the best mediation or intervention" in the exploitative actions of other mineral hungry imperial powers, "let us prepare for the settlement by

³⁹ See, for example, *Times of London* January 23, 25, and 30, 1923.

⁴⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, January 31, 1923.

⁴¹ *New Leader*, January 5, 1923.

⁴² For Labour solidarity on the Ruhr crisis, see Henry R. Winkler, *Paths Not Taken: British Labour and International Policy in the 1920's* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina, 1994), p. 96.

cleaning our own record and freeing our own hands in the East.”⁴³ Oil was a far more combustible factor in global politics than coal, however. As George Young warned forebodingly in the *New Leader*, like the inflammable crude itself, “once oil gets into politics, any spark may set our whole world in a blaze that must be left to burn itself out.” It was up to a “strong Labour government” to ‘cement-off’ the oil problem in British politics before that happened.⁴⁴

Certainly, Bonar Law recognized the tide of opinion on the mandate in Iraq over the course of the elections and campaigned on reducing British responsibility as far as possible if elected.⁴⁵ On February 20, 1923, the new Prime Minister insisted to the House of Commons that, in framing his administration’s approach to Iraq, “the question of oil did not enter into the matter at all” and that he and his government were “strongly in favor of quitting, if that can be arranged on honourable terms.”⁴⁶ The Labour press bitterly ridiculed the subsequent and contradictory brief by Winston Churchill leading the House, according to the *Daily Herald*, to expect “the establishment of a new Nineveh and the resurrection of another Nebuchenezzar” in Iraq despite the fact that “that the very word ‘Mesopot’ stinks in the nostrils of the British public, and ‘Irak’ is no less offensive to our nerves.”⁴⁷ This contradictory and even duplicitous attitude from the Bonar Law administration, the *New Leader* reported, was an affront to the British people, whose will was reflected in the “demand for evacuation... from every quarter of the House.” It was common knowledge, the *New Leader* insisted, that, “Arabs never wanted our rule, that

⁴³ *New Leader*, January 19, 1923.

⁴⁴ *New Leader*, January 20, 1923.

⁴⁵ Othman Ali, “The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923,” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 522.

⁴⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, February 21, 1923.

⁴⁷ *Daily Herald*, February 21, 1923.

our 'coupon' King Feisal was foisted upon them by intrigue, and is maintained only by our subsidies and our bombing planes. Repeated revolts, both in Iraq proper and in Mosul, have made the pretense that we stay there to keep faith with the Arabs, too ridiculous even for Parliamentary use."⁴⁸ By March, the Bonar Law administration had adopted the position that, although reduction in responsibilities in Iraq was of paramount importance, "this country... was not going out at the point of the Turkish bayonet."⁴⁹ Although Labour and Liberal MP's alike, according to the *Daily Herald's* account of the March debate in the House of Bonar Law's Iraq policy, seemed to agree that, "given anything like a free vote of this House, it seems clear that we should decide to clear out of Mesopotamia," Bonar Law, like Lloyd George before him, seemed content to remain in Iraq, according to Labour MP's, "until the Kurds don frockcoats and become Presbyterian ministers."⁵⁰

In drafting the Bonar Law administration's policy for Iraq, the special Cabinet Committee assigned to the task arrived at the same conclusion as its predecessors, but with even more conviction in light of Turkish intransigence at Lausanne, that evacuation of Iraq would lead directly to internal collapse and Turkish occupation "with the results to British interests in those regions, and even in India, that might well in the long run be disastrous."⁵¹ The Committee was forced to recognize, however, "that there exists a powerful body of opinion, both in Parliament and the country, which favors... an early

⁴⁸ *New Leader*, February 23, 1923.

⁴⁹ *Times of London*, March 2, 1923, the words are attributed to Ormsby-Gore.

⁵⁰ *Daily Herald*, March 2, 1923.

⁵¹ For the formation of the Committee and its preoccupation with evacuation, see Othman Ali, "The Kurds and the Lausanne Peace Negotiations, 1922-1923," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 522-524. For the report of the Committee, see Cabinet Committee on Iraq Report, March 23, 1923. NA, CAB/27/206/103.

escape from the responsibilities... [we] have been forced to assume in Iraq... [if not] immediate evacuation," a policy Bonar Law had, in fact, campaigned on. To bridge this gap in policy commitments, the Committee recommended the compromise of an addendum to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty known as the Protocol that would reduce its length from twenty down to four years, dating from the pending settlement of the Iraqi frontier with Turkey, at which point the British government would recommend Iraq for membership to the League of Nations. As a further concession to opposition in Iraq, the Protocol also proposed that negotiations over the more contentious aspects of the current Treaty should be completed before its four-year expiration and form the basis of a new, post-mandate Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.⁵² This formula, policy planners believed, would encourage the Turkish delegates to accept the status quo with the hope that they might more effectively make their case after the four-year term of the Treaty had passed as well as quell the clamor for evacuation in Britain and give Iraqi nationalists a sense of accommodation and progress toward complete independence.⁵³ The fact that the nature of the Protocol had been kept secret from even Faysal, let alone the British or Iraqi public, for the duration of its planning over the spring of 1923 lends a degree of irony to the concern of its drafters that the Protocol "appear to the world" as a mutual agreement among peoples, "and not as a settlement imposed upon Iraq by Great Britain."⁵⁴

⁵² Cabinet Committee on Iraq Report, March 23, 1923. NA, CAB/27/206/103 For a discussion of the Protocol, see Ireland, p. 378 and 406.

⁵³ The official documents discussing the logic of the Protocol compromise are located in NA/CO/730/39.

⁵⁴ Shuckburgh to Secretary of State April 25, 1923. NA, CO/730/39/20768 For the "astonishment" of members of the House, and particularly, Commander Kenworthy, as well as their frustrations at not being permitted an opportunity to debate the Protocol before its announcement, see *Times of London*, May 4, 1923. For discussions of potential reactions from Faysal and the Iraqi Cabinet, and thus, evidence of their ignorance of the Protocol, see Shuckburgh memo, April 16, 1923 on Faysal's ignorance of the Committee's conclusions and nature of Protocol. NA, CO/730/39/584. For a discussion of the largely positive perspective of the Sa'dun Cabinet on the Protocol, see `Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat Al-Iraqiyah* (Sayda: Matba'at al-Irfan, 1953), pp. 125.

In his announcement of the Protocol compromise in Baghdad on May 3, 1923, Cox emphasized the “great strides along the path of development” Iraq had made since the signature of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty October last and the fact that both the British and the Iraqis were “equally anxious that the commitments and responsibilities of His Majesty’s Government in respect to Iraq should be terminated as soon as possible.”⁵⁵ In praising the Protocol, Faysal also identified it as the clearest evidence of the “rapid strides” made by Iraqis and “proof of [British] confidence in the proficiency and competence of the people of Iraq.”⁵⁶ As if to galvanize the moment of transition, Cox announced his retirement just a few days later with a farewell address expressing his satisfaction that his tenure had seen the resolution of key tensions and set Iraq down the road to independence and membership in the League.⁵⁷ The Residency had to admit, however, that the Protocol’s announcement “has not excited the interest which was anticipated” in Iraq. Enemies of the Treaty, it was reported, viewed the Protocol as a stopgap, buying time for British advisors to ensconce themselves into the bedrock of Iraq’s developing political economy before Turkish belligerence or Iraqi unrest drove them out. On the other end of the spectrum, pro-Treaty clients of the British among the landowning or ruling elite viewed the four-year term as a revocation of British promises to ensure the longevity of their power and prestige in the Iraqi state.⁵⁸

In the reaction of the Iraqi press to the Protocol, three related interpretations stand out. The first was that the Protocol compromise was the direct result of the collective opposition to the mandate and the Treaty of the Iraqi and the British public. The second was that its promulgation, with no reference to the League of Nations, meant that British obligations to the League were not as binding as the Residency claimed. Third, the

⁵⁵ For the full text of the announcement, see Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 10 for May 15, 1923. NA, FO/371/9009

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Protocol set an irrevocable precedent of acknowledging Iraqi political maturity as a state and, thus, Iraqi independence. Still the only paper in publication other than *al Iraq*, *al Asimah* preempted the announcement of the Protocol by a few days with a review of the progress of Iraqi development on May 3, identifying three distinct phases. The first phase comprised British colonialism, in which Wilson was permitted to rule “as though in a country like India governed directly by the British Crown.” This phase, the writer argued, was brought to a close by the violent opposition of the Iraqi people in the 1920 rising. The second phase one of British acquiescence, though decidedly imperfect and incomplete, to Iraqi demands under Cox, involving the “transfer of many important duties from English to Iraqi officials,” the formation of a Council of State, the selection of an Arab monarch, and the early stages of transition from a mandate to a treaty relationship. The third stage, again the result of Iraqi criticisms of her quasi-colonial status, would be characterized by “the principle of withdrawal from Iraq gradually” that Cox, no doubt, was about to return to Baghdad and announce in the days to come.⁵⁹

The announcement of the Protocol was the “best source” of evidence, *al Asimah* proclaimed, that the “fitness of the Iraqi people to control their own affairs” and “the refusal of the English people any longer to shoulder the burden of the responsibility for Iraq” were the “two main causes” determining the course of the Anglo-Iraq relationship. “Everyone has seen,” *al Asimah* stated, “the very general desire which has grown up in England for the evacuation of Iraq and the surrender of the task of government to the people.” The transferability of this policy between British governments merely proved that “the differences of British politicians have been merely differences of opinion as to the best means of achieving this end without endangering British imperial and commercial interests in the East.”⁶⁰ As the ‘moderate’ party, it is significant that *al*

⁵⁹ *al Asimah*, May 3, 1923.

⁶⁰ *al Asimah*, May 7, 1923.

Asimah identified the moment as opportune for the artificial divisions between the so-called “optimists and the pessimists, the moderates and the extremists” be abandoned and Iraqis permit themselves to be “unified by their patriotism and the common cause of their country.”⁶¹

As part of the Residency’s new regime under the Protocol, *al Istiqlal* was permitted to resume publication on May 17, to the consternation of Sir Henry Dobbs, Cox’s replacement as High Commissioner.⁶² *Al Istiqlal* also attributed the transition in British policy to the activism of the Iraqi people and, particularly, to itself, having fought from its inception for “freedom of speech, of writing and of assembly... the abolition of martial law... calling of an assembly representing the nation to frame a constitution... the surrender of the reins of Government to the sons of the country only and the expulsion of the intruders who are sponging on it” in the face of “severe persecution and the sorrows of imprisonment and exile” and “repeated orders which have suspended this journal... three times in succession, sometimes without trial.”⁶³ In addition to suppressing the voice of the Iraqi people, as *al Istiqlal* styled itself, the British had also struggled to disable Iraqi political development, rather than progress it. The reason, *al Istiqlal* explained, that the British had not, in the nearly four years of Iraqi political life, permitted the drafting of a constitution “which will define the duties and rights of all and which will secure democracy by laws which cannot be abrogated except by the independent representatives of the people,” for example, was precisely because a “Government supported by the strong arms of the people will be able to show its strength to those who desire its degradation.” *Al Istiqlal* enjoined Iraqis to build off the Protocol immediately by demanding open elections, “so that the people may have an opportunity to declare its will in connection with the treaty and its protocol.” “This is the age of democracy and

⁶¹ *al Asimah*, May 8, 1923.

⁶² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 09, May 1, 1923 and Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11, June 1, 1923. NA, FO/371/9009

⁶³ *al Istiqlal*, May 17, 1923.

freedom,” *al Istiqlal* insisted, “and we will not accept an administration not in accord with civilized and democratic principles.”⁶⁴

In this endeavor, *al Asimah* reasoned, the Protocol had turned the humiliating imposition of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty into a clear advantage. In a series of articles published toward the end of May, *al Asimah* illustrated for its readers that the combination of Treaty and Protocol constituted an acknowledgement that “the legal status [of Iraq] has been changed.”⁶⁵ What this meant, *al Asimah* explained, was that “whether [the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and Protocol] are ratified by the parliaments of both countries” or not, “now that she has been a signatory to this treaty with Iraq... Great Britain cannot claim before the League of Nations or the civilized world that she has any longer a right to continue the protection over Iraq.”⁶⁶ *Al Istiqlal* concurred, arguing that the British excuse in denying Iraqi independence that the mandate “is a duty which has been entrusted to us by the noble League... we cannot lightly disregard” was proven false by the Protocol itself. Had not the British determined the duration of the mandate to be twenty years in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty “although the League made no resolution in this connection” and then, “when the English saw the determination of the Iraq people to gain their ends and the difficulties which they would have to face in Iraq,” reduced the term from twenty down to four years, “again without reference to the League?” Based on these facts, *al Istiqlal* argued, it seemed quite clear that,

the lengthening or decreasing of the duration of the mandates, even the matter of establishing or removing the mandates does not depend on the opinion of the League but on the determination of the mandated people and the difficulties which they can create for the mandatory power. The greater the efforts for independence and the greater the difficulties of the protecting powers the shorter will be the duration of the protectorate and *vice versa*.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *al Istiqlal*, May 21, 1923.

⁶⁵ *al Asimah*, May 23, 1923.

⁶⁶ *al Asimah*, May 24, 1923.

⁶⁷ *al Istiqlal*, May 22, 1923.

al Asimah followed up over the next few days with a series of articles on Iraq's political future discussing the roles of the Iraqi people, the Iraq government, and the British mandatory power. The Iraqi people, *al Asimah* lamented, "suffered from political lethargy" represented by too few political parties, the few existing having been "animated by personal prejudice." It was their obligation to engage in the development of their government and state by joining political parties, voting in the elections, demanding that those elections be free, and giving their service, be it intellectual or physical, to the state. The role of the Iraqi government was quite simple, it must submit to becoming "an instrument of the will of the Iraqi people." The British administration, in turn, was expected to turn control over the Iraqi state, not to the Iraqi government *per se*, but to the Iraqi people, through ensuring that elections occur at the earliest possible moment and that those "elections are held in a clear atmosphere free from martial law and extra legal actions and the freedom of parties and assemblies."⁶⁸

In his instructions as High Commissioner, Dobbs was informed that the basic principle underlying the Bonar Law administration's approach to Anglo-Iraqi relations was "co-operation towards... the progressive establishment of an independent Government of Iraq, friendly to and bound by gratitude and obligation to His Britannic Majesty's Government."⁶⁹ An Iraqi Parliament imbued by the electoral process with popular legitimacy, it was believed, would not only quiet the clamor for evacuation in London and for complete independence in Iraq, but also strengthen the British case for Mosul and open the way for legislation concerning Iraq's financial and military development.⁷⁰ In any event, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and Protocol could not be ratified until a popularly elected assembly had been put in place to ratify them and, in so doing,

⁶⁸ See *al Asimah*, May 24, 26, and 27, 1923.

⁶⁹ Instructions to Dobbs, September 19, 1923. NA, CO/730/41

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

clearly articulate in legal language the precise relationship between British advisors and the Iraqi state they were attempting to shape in Britain's imperial interests.⁷¹

It was the Residency's hope in late May 1923 that the promise of membership to the League in four years would entice "the anti-British elements towards withdrawing their opposition to the elections. For it is obvious that admission to the League of Nations can only be gained by electing a Constituent Assembly and passing the Organic Law and ratifying the Treaty." With "all three of the newspapers now published," meaning *al Iraq*, *al Asimah*, and *al Istiqlal*, "advocating the holding of elections at the earliest possible date," Dobbs had every reason to believe that the re-commencement of the elections would prove considerably smoother than the preceding fall.⁷² Accordingly, Dobbs began seeding the field of Iraqi opinion that June with the promise of 'free elections,' as demanded by the Iraqi press, but also with the subtle threat that, should such opposition be again permitted to derail the electoral process, the consequences for Iraq's political future would be dire.

On June 12, for example, Dobbs announced that Iraq was not, as the press had long attested, under martial law, that it had not been so since the end of the 1920 rising and that no such limitations would hamper the complete freedom of the coming elections for a Constituent Assembly to approve an Iraqi constitution and electoral law and begin the process of electing an Iraqi Parliament. Meanwhile, however, the Iraqi Cabinet was passing legislation to amend the Baghdad Penal Code to permit the "dispatch to the State of which he is a national" any individual convicted of a crime or misdemeanor with a sentence of over a month and to significantly broaden the definition of "publication" to

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11 June 1, 1923. *NA, FO/371/9009*

include any public expression, written or spoken in its laws against sedition.⁷³ The Residency's vernacular paper, the *Baghdad Times*, accompanied the announcement with a statement of its surety that the compromises contained in the Protocol would surely have met the objections of the "the more extremist political associations... suppressed last year." The writer also warned Iraqis, however, that "a new British Premier is now in power," referring to the replacement of Bonar Law by Stanley Baldwin due to Bonar Law's sudden illness, "who, it is notorious, was the leading opponent of the policy of retaining British forces in Iraq and who would jump, even more eagerly than Mr. Bonar Law would have done, at any valid excuse for clearing out." If there were to be "an outburst of agitation against the amended Treaty," the article anticipated, "John Bull will utter a cry of relief to find that he is not wanted... and there will be an irresistible agitation in Great Britain for an immediate withdrawal of all the British Forces from Iraq."⁷⁴ *Al Iraq* followed up the article with its agreement that, under the new circumstances, unwanted and self-serving agitation against the Treaty and the Protocol promised only to reverse the gains they had made and ensure "the continuation of foreign control" and the concentration of "the affairs of state in the hands of those over whom the people have no control."⁷⁵

al Asimah and *al Istiqlal*, however, scoffed at what the two papers perceived as an attempt, typical of British colonial policy, to present imperial rule as something less than antithetical to indigenous independence. In reply to Dobbs' inability "to understand

⁷³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 13, June 6, 1923. NA, FO/371/9009 For a discussion of the Sa'dun Cabinet's perspectives on preparing for and dealing with opposition to the elections see `Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat Al-'Iraqiyah* (Sayda: Matba'at al-'Irfan, 1953), pp. 128-134.

⁷⁴ *Baghdad Times*, June 11, 1923.

⁷⁵ *al Iraq*, June 14, 1923.

whence can have arisen the idea that Iraq is in any way subjected to martial law,”⁷⁶ *al Asimah* expressed its inability to comprehend “under what kind of law... men of this country were sent to Henjam and Persia [or] the nationalist press suppressed” or under which “the former High Commissioner [could have] assumed responsibility for these momentous actions.”⁷⁷ If Iraq was not under martial law, *al Asimah* stated, “there was certainly some other kind of law resembling it in severity.”⁷⁸ *Al Istiqlal* was even more deeply wounded by Dobbs’ denial in that, its editor claimed, it was “we alone who have raised our voice in the name of the nation... demanding the abolition of martial law” in the face of suppression and imprisonment.⁷⁹ Even after Dobbs’ announcement, *al Istiqlal* noted a few days later, when “one of our eloquent citizens began to make a speech” at a farewell gathering for Sayid Muhsin Abu Tabikh, a Shi’a anti-election agitator who’s deportation to Persia had been ordered under the new Penal code, “he was stopped by the Police in the name of the Director of Public Security.”⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as *al Asimah* pointed out, the gesture gave leverage to Iraqi patriots concerned with free elections as well as acknowledged the legitimacy of the struggles, well-known to the Iraqi people, of “the intelligentsia of this country... [for] the abolition of martial law, the complete freedom of the press, the withdrawal of the postal censorship and liberty for the formation of political societies, and assembly of political meetings.”⁸¹ What was now needed, *al Asimah* argued, was the full participation of the entire nation in elections for a Constituent Assembly, but not only “to control the High Commissioner... and compel

⁷⁶ *al Asimah*, June 11, 1923.

⁷⁷ *al Asimah*, June 12, 1923.

⁷⁸ *al Asimah*, June 12, 1923.

⁷⁹ *al Istiqlal*, June 12, 1923.

⁸⁰ *al Istiqlal*, June 15, 1923.

⁸¹ *al Asimah*, June 12, 1923.

[the British] to abandon their policy of banishments and exile and to ensure freedom of speech,” but also “because a nation which cannot form such an assembly is not fit for independence.”⁸²

Both *al Istiqlal* and *al Asimah* undertook the responsibility of translating the expression of national identity they had read in the popular opposition to an illegitimate political system into an expression of political maturity through popular participation in legitimate elections. Both papers referenced the ongoing struggles all around them as examples to follow and inspiration to act. “All over the Arab territories,” *al Istiqlal* reported in June 1923, “there is an intellectual movement and a sort of struggle to deliver these territories from the influence of foreigners and the wavering agents of mischief.” Among “our brethren the sons of Palestine,” however, “there is a blessed awakening which all but exceeds that of Egypt.” The “best feature of the Palestine renaissance,” *al Istiqlal* argued, was “the close union of her sons in resisting immigration of the Jews and the rejection of the mandate” as a foreign form of government. With but a quarter of the population and a tenth of the wealth of Iraq, Palestinians had organized politically on a national level, effectively mobilizing the “energy and fidelity” of the people behind a united front of nationalist leaders to challenge injurious legislation, unfair elections, and treaty agreements “prejudicial to the public interest.” Coupled with the efforts of Palestinians to preserve their free press, organize political and economic conferences and national demonstrations, any Iraqi must admit that, whereas “Palestine has surpassed all Arab territories... we have not yet done a little part of what the sons of Palestine have

⁸² *al Asimah*, June 11, 1923.

achieved in order to restore our glory and to achieve the longed for union under the shade of complete independence.”⁸³

Days later, *al Istiqlal* offered a review of recent developments in Egypt to demonstrate, as the headline stated, that “the state of affairs in Egypt is similar to what is going on in Iraq.” *Al Istiqlal* attributed the release of Egyptian nationalist leader Sa’ad Zaghloul and his colleagues from prison and the lifting of martial law to the collective efforts of Egyptian nationalists and “the liberals among the English” who listened to the “bitter complaints of the Egyptians and their cry for deliverance to the world,” concluded that “the difficulty in Egypt would become a continuous disturbance in the Arab East,” and “fought their battle and convinced the opposing parties to adopt a fair policy by which the Egyptians remain absolutely free in their country.” As developments in Iraq had also taught, *al Istiqlal* argued, “international policy changes according to political and economic interests” and that, having occupied Iraq in the name of English interests, the English will be disinclined to stay “if they find that by doing so they will injure their own interests and create difficulties... in the present and the future.”⁸⁴ With *al Istiqlal*, *al Asimah* stressed that “the Great War has changed the structure of society... all peoples are now striving to find the road to success” and that Iraqis must follow the example of other nations, lest the moment be lost.⁸⁵ Already, *al Istiqlal* argued in early July, the efforts of the Egyptians to erect a modern government and those of the Palestinians to obstruct the colonization of their nation had noticeably “compelled Great Britain to submit to right and give attention to what is going on... before the situation gets too

⁸³ *al Istiqlal*, June 25, 1923.

⁸⁴ *al Istiqlal*, June 27, 1923.

⁸⁵ *al Asimah*, June 25, 1923.

dangerous... [and] changed the old policy of Great Britain... let us strive to emulate the actions of our brave and noble brothers.”⁸⁶

The key theme, for the press, of Iraqi unity in the name of political power was shaken somewhat by the renewed *fatwas* emanating out of the Shi’a *ulema* in Kadhimain and the symbolic semi-voluntary exodus of nine Shi’a divines to Persia in the wake of the subsequent arrests for interference with the elections in July 1923.⁸⁷ Although sympathetic with the gesture, which both *al Asimah* and *al Istiqlal* supported during the first round of elections, both papers took a somewhat different view in the summer of 1923. In reporting on the exodus, *al Asimah* stated that the act “has for one reason given us great pleasure and for many reasons grief.” On the one hand, the absconding *ulema* were all “learned and respected” figures in Iraq who had long spoken for “the spirit of a section of the Iraqi nation” whose departure threatened to “permanently mark by the policy of exile and banishment... the history of our new awakening.” On the other hand, by exiling themselves to Persia, the Shi’a *ulema* were merely acknowledging their noble Persian identity, clarifying for Iraqis that their government should be “free from all those who would confuse religion with politics to the corruption of the latter and the degradation of the former” and “to the nations of the world” that the Iraqi people are “firmly attached to the cause of their complete independence... [and] hold their nation and their patriotism above all persons,” even such revered and respected persons the *ulema*.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *al Istiqlal*, July 5, 1923.

⁸⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 14, July 5, 1923. NA, FO/371/9009 Also see Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 81-82 and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat*.

⁸⁸ *al Asimah*, July 2, 1923. See also *al Istiqlal*, June 29, 1923, and August 20, 1923.

On August 3, with the Electoral Committee for the Constituent Assembly in place, *al Istiqlal* announced Iraq's first official candidate, the renowned poet and literary scholar, Ma'ruf ibn Abd al Ghani al Rusafi.⁸⁹ Al Rusafi's program, which the Residency described as "a fair representation of the views of the average politically awakened Iraqi," was as follows.⁹⁰ The existing government had been a necessary, but temporary measure that "cannot legally exist permanently" and must be replaced by a Constituent Assembly, freely elected by the people and comprised of men of "sense, foresight, free thought, and honest intention." The first duty of the Assembly would be to draft an Iraqi Constitution defining the form of government desired by the people, al Rusafi's preferred form being "democratic and representative" with the "authority vested in the people" and the powers of the King "limited and restricted." Al Rusafi placed the development of Iraq's economy at the fore of his program, insisting that interconnectivity of national interests in the modern global economy had made "economic independence... more difficult for a nation to achieve than political independence." Without the former, the later was impossible. Finally, al Rusafi addressed the future of Anglo-Iraqi relations. In exchange for England's recognition of Iraqi independence and reduction of British control and interference in Iraqi politics, al-Rusafi intended to ensure that British economic interests, mutually agreed upon, were protected, "not by them, but by us." As for the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, al Rusafi pointed out that it had been signed by a temporary and not formally legalized government and

⁸⁹ al Rusafi was poet and literary scholar interested in the struggles of an emerging Arab working classes who took to writing anti-colonialist literature and poems after the 1920 rising.

⁹⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 16, August 9, 1923. NA, FO/371/9009

that, “all that it contains which is in accord with what I have said is acceptable to me, and all that is contrary, I reject.”⁹¹

To the disappointment of Dobbs and the Residency, the attitude taken up by al-Rusafi, that the current government, the Treaty, and even the King were technically unconstitutional in origin quickly took root as a major campaign platform threatening to overwhelm the halting progress of more ‘moderate’ candidates especially in outlying regions.⁹² Accordingly, *al Istiqlal* and others clamored for any information they could get on the progress of the Treaty negotiations and drafting of the constitution, arguing that all candidates for the Constituent Assembly should make their positions on the Treaty as clear as possible so that the people could get behind those who represented their views.⁹³ In an early warning of events to come, the *Baghdad Times* expressed its opinion in early September that campaigning on the promise to accept, amend, or reject the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and Protocol was somewhat moot in that, “the task of the Assembly will be either to accept or reject [the Treaty]. If the Assembly rejects the Treaty immediate evacuation of Iraq by the British Forces will take place.” Should the Assembly accept the Treaty, however, Iraq stood a chance at becoming a member of the League of Nations within one year.⁹⁴

Although Treaty negotiations continued in secret, a draft of Iraq’s first constitution, known as the Organic Law, was published in the vernacular press on November 9, 1923, with the Constituent Assembly elections nearly complete. Pronounced by Faysal to be

⁹¹ *al Istiqlal*, August 3, 1923.

⁹² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 18, September 20, 1923. NA, FO/371/9010

⁹³ See, for example, *al Istiqlal* September 12, 1923. NA, FO/371/9010

⁹⁴ *Baghdad Times*, September 10, 1923. (172) See also Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 96-97.

“one of the most advanced constitutions in the civilized world,”⁹⁵ *al Istiqlal* nevertheless called upon Iraq’s jurists and lawyers to give the draft “minute examination letter by letter” and to make their views known to the public through the press, for “there are many ignorant of the law” and the views of legal specialists “will be the best guide for the Assembly when it comes to consider the matter.”⁹⁶ One such lawyer, Salman al-Shaikh Daud, published a series of articles on the Organic Law in *al Iraq*.⁹⁷ The first article compared the constitution with those of other “progressive countries” and giving credit to Iraqi legislative authorities for drafting a document “consistent with the wishes of the majority” as well as “convenient to the political and social conditions of the country.”⁹⁸ A second article traced the history of the constitutional monarchy to eighteenth-century England, comparing constitutional development in France, America, Spain, and England, and illustrating the relationship between the English constitution and Parliament with those in other regions modeled after them, such as Iraq.⁹⁹ A third article dissected the constitution article by article, alternately praising and criticizing it in relation to international and internationalist ideals. The Iraqi constitution exceeded some European models in its emphasis on the vestment of political power in the hands of all Iraqis equally, irrespective of caste or creed, and in placing that power above both the government and the King. Daud criticized the caveats permitting the subjugation of

⁹⁵ The full text of the speech was published in *Baghdad Times*, September 25, 1923.

⁹⁶ *al Istiqlal*, November 9, 1923.

⁹⁷ Perhaps the most complete consideration of Shaikh Daud and his family concerns their involvement in what Noga Efrati has referred to as an awakening of feminist identity in interwar Iraq in “The Other ‘Awakening’ in Iraq: The Women’s Movement in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 1 (November 2004): 153-173. Butti also discusses Shaikh Daud as a respected contributor to the Iraqi press, notable for the diversity of publications his articles appeared in, which included even the oppositional *al Iraq* and *al Istiqlal*, see Rafail Butti, *Al-Sihafah Fi Al-‘Iraq*, p. 93-94.

⁹⁸ *al Iraq*, November 12, 1923.

⁹⁹ *al Iraq*, November 13, 1923.

Iraqis to “bonds or suffering... exile or transportation... [or] compulsion to change residence... [and the] denial of recourse to the Courts... in accordance with the law,” all being “punishment favored by autocrats” and generally “prohibited in all civilized law” in most other constitutions.¹⁰⁰ In early December, *al Istiqlal* followed up Daud’s analysis with a consideration of the constitution against the principles of Jean Rousseau’s *Social Contract* by the Baghdadi lawyer Mahami Ali Mahmud.¹⁰¹ Presenting Rousseau’s ideas as ‘foundational to European constitutionalism,’ Mahmud explained how the constitution was merely a reflection of the guiding principle that “the rule in fact lies with the people and the Government is but an executive authority to carry out their aspirations and wishes,” offering quotations from a French Parliamentary debates dating back to the 1790’s as evidence of its legitimacy.¹⁰²

What all of this comparative legal analysis amounted to, *al Istiqlal* informed the secondary electors gathered together in February 1924 to elect the final members of the Constituent Assembly, was that no single nation in Europe would have considered the draft constitution prepared for them by the British nor the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty approved by their predecessors as binding in any legal sense as they were not drafted or approved by a representative assembly. It was the responsibility of a representative Constituent Assembly, therefore, and not the British, to decide for themselves the form of government Iraq would have and whether or not to accept the so-called Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which *al Istiqlal* insisted was “not really a treaty if we consider the legal features and characteristics of treaties” and “would have been better to have given it the term

¹⁰⁰ *al Iraq*, November 14, 1923.

¹⁰¹ For a discussion of Ali Mahmud as central figure of the anti-Treaty movement in the press, see Rafail Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 93-94.

¹⁰² *al Istiqlal*, December 9, 1923.

‘Charter of Independence’.”¹⁰³ By April 1924, the Residency was beginning to more clearly identify the sources of such legalistic analysis in what British Political Officers described as a “small group of intelligentsia” comprised of “law students and lawyers” affiliated with various allegedly non-political social societies, such as the adult-education society Ma’had al Ilmi.¹⁰⁴ Alarming, such individuals had made a strong showing as Constituent Assembly candidates, who the Residency identified in March as collectively posing a significant threat to the approval of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.¹⁰⁵ Although a minority, this ‘lawyer’s group’ as they were more regularly referred to by the Residency over the course of 1924 was also gaining ground among powerful aspirants to power like Yasin al Hashimi, a former Sharifian officer who, the Residency believed, desired “to play himself in the Iraq a part resembling that of Zaghlul Pasha in Egypt.”¹⁰⁶

The Residency attempted to counter such legalistic arguments about the legitimacy of the instruments of government produced under the Council of State or Faysal’s Cabinet with its own comparative analysis in the *Baghdad Times*, arguing that, “according to international practice,” as evidenced by the Treaty of Versailles as well as the recent Anglo-Irish Treaty, once signed by both parties, no alterations or amendments to a treaty may be made before its ratification. The obvious reason for this being that, should one party be allowed to make alterations, then the other would feel at liberty to do the same, resulting in the treaty never being ultimately ratified.¹⁰⁷ *Al Istiqlal* countered with an expose on “the worn-out policy of Colonization” being substituted everywhere

¹⁰³ *al Istiqlal*, February 25, 1924.

¹⁰⁴ See Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 08 for April 17, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹⁰⁵ A complete list of the deputies annotated with their position on the Treaty is offered in Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 5 March 6, 1924.

¹⁰⁶ See Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 08 for April 17, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹⁰⁷ *Baghdad Times*, April 10, 1924.

with treaties of alliance made with the very revolutionaries it had created, such as “Gandhi in India, Zaghlul in Egypt, DeValera in Ireland, and Abdul Karim in Morocco” specifically.¹⁰⁸ The next day, *al Istiqlal* followed with two articles by deputies of the Assembly arguing that the 1920 uprising was crucial in ‘accelerating’ if not forcing the transition in British policy away from colonization and toward the development of national government and that demanding that the British modify the Treaty and subsidiary agreements before ratification was well within the rights of the Iraqi people and their elected representatives.¹⁰⁹

In early April, matters came to a head when the Ministry of the Interior denied the request of prominent member of the ‘lawyer’s group’ and newly elected Assembly member for Baghdad Shaikh Ahmed Daud to hold a meeting of deputies outside the Assembly which the Residency believed had the “avowed purpose of delivering orations adverse to the Treaty.”¹¹⁰ In an interview on the subject in *al Iraq*, Minister of Defense Nuri al-Said defended the decision with the argument that, once popularly elected, the Assembly was obliged “to express its opinion on behalf of the nation... and not [the opinion of] the nation itself.” The intention of those “of the lawyers’ class” to “acquaint the deputies with the opinion of the nation,” as they interpreted it, on the Treaty, Nuri argued, was an unwelcome intrusion of one interest group into the operations of the government.¹¹¹ For the hosts of the event, however, the obstruction was a blatant violation of their right to free speech, which they condemned bitterly in the press.¹¹² The suppression saw the immediate appearance of more direct anti-Treaty propaganda in the

¹⁰⁸ *al Istiqlal*, April 10, 1924.

¹⁰⁹ *al Istiqlal*, April 11, 1924.

¹¹⁰ See Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 08 for April 17, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹¹¹ *al Iraq*, April 12, 1923.

¹¹² See for example, *al Istiqlal* April 14, 1924.

press, including former Ministry of Education official Saiyid Muhammad Abdul Hussayn's recently launched *al Sha'b*,¹¹³ which called the Treaty "a fearful figure and looked at by the public as frightful" and directly linked through a deplorable course of events all the way back to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1915. It was the responsibility of the Assembly, he declared, to "solve its puzzles, unveil its contents, and expose it to the public in its real nature."¹¹⁴ Under such pressure from the press, and the 'lawyer's group's' newfound patron and Constituent Assembly member Yasin al Hashimi, the Cabinet backed down and permitted the meeting with the stipulation that the deputies forego any discussion of political issues.¹¹⁵ As Residency agents reported, however, the controversy drew a large crowd to the April 17th meeting, which was characterized by fulminations against the Treaty and the British alike.¹¹⁶

On the day of the meeting, Nuri al-Said attempted to counter the brewing anti-Treaty fervor with another interview in *al Iraq* professing his own dissatisfaction with the Treaty and even insisting that "there is no one in the Iraq nation who believes that this Treaty secures all our national aspirations... each of us knows that it deprives us of many of the distinctions and rights enjoyed by free independent nations and that it is inconsistent with many of the aspirations of the nation and its wishes." Nevertheless, he pointed out, the delicate balance of Iraq's "international situation" of being caught between two rivaling empires for possession of its territory and resources demanded that Iraqis "should accept the Treaty in spite of all its defects" as the quickest way of bringing definition and stability to Iraq's domestic and foreign political relations. In any event, he

¹¹³ Butti has described *al Sha'b* as a political journal with an very heavy hand in its criticisms and thorough in its research. Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ *al Sha'b*, April 15, 1924.

¹¹⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 08 for April 17, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹¹⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 9 for May 1, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

reminded his readers, however unsatisfying the Treaty might be, the four-year term of it was a small price to pay for the promise of complete independence.¹¹⁷ Counter arguments in *al Istiqlal* and *al Sha'b* drove the tension between pro-and anti-Treaty elements into a fervor, however and within two days of the lawyer's meeting two pro-Treaty deputies were attacked in public, offering just the opportunity Dobbs needed to arrest every non-deputy known to have attended the lawyers' meeting (and even a few who couldn't make it) along with the two suspected assailants and to indefinitely suspend *al Istiqlal* and *al Sha'b*.¹¹⁸

A key contributing factor to the increasingly aggressive opposition to the Treaty in the Iraqi press seems also to have been the advent of the first Labour government in British history, almost by accident, when Baldwin over-confidently called for a general election in the wake of Bonar Law's illness and retirement just a few months into his administration in the spring of 1923. *Al Istiqlal* for one celebrated the "triumph of Labour" as having "thrown the Lords and Conservatives into a great state of agitation and fear for the future of the Empire." For, in addition to their support of the anti-colonialist Bolshevik movement, Labour was also viewed as "the principal supporters" of Palestinian claims against the Zionists, the main critics of the Versailles settlement, French policy in Syria, and the mandatory system in general. British Labour, *al Istiqlal* reported was "now the strongest Labour party in Europe" and "the first benefit for which Arabs may look from the Labour victory is the abandonment of the policy of

¹¹⁷ *al Iraq*, April 17, 1924.

¹¹⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 9 for May 1, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

colonization” that had characterized British policy in the Arab world.¹¹⁹ Nor was *al Istiqlal* alone in this feeling. As the correspondent for Baghdad from the *Times of London* wrote toward the end of January, “bazaar opinion” in Baghdad, particularly in “Nationalist circles” was “full of hope” that “Haji Ramzi,” as Ramsay MacDonald was reported as having come, affectionately, to be known in Baghdadi coffee-shops, and his “Labour Party will give Eastern aspirations for independence even more sympathetic consideration than the Conservatives have shown since the war” while continuing to offer British support.¹²⁰

The Residency reported an immediate “perturbation in coffee shops and diwans” following Labour’s election, noting that “ill wishers” of the Iraqi government had already seized upon it as an opportunity for propaganda.¹²¹ The “political crisis,” as the Residency referred to Labour’s election, had, in fact “agitated Baghdad almost as much as London.” Rumors abounded that “the Labour Party had declared for a ‘bag and baggage’ policy with regard to Iraq.” Faysal in particular was “much alarmed,” repeatedly insisting that Dobbs telegraph London to inquire whether a change in policy was likely and going so far as to begin organizing an Iraqi delegation to go to London “to get in touch with the new British Government and convince them that popular feeling in Iraq was entirely in favour of the Treaty policy and friendly to Great Britain and that withdrawal would be disastrous.”¹²² Shuckburgh viewed the proposal as “impertinent” and “undesirable” and, in any event, “to be discouraged in every possible way” for being

¹¹⁹ *al Istiqlal*, December 14, 1923.

¹²⁰ *Times of London* January 29, 1924.

¹²¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 1, January 24, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹²² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 3, February 7, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098 For an intimate look into Faysal’s perspective on British politics and perceptions of Iraq in the British press, see Sir Harry C. Sinderson, *Ten Thousand and One Nights: Memoirs of Iraq’s Sherifian Dynasty* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973).

an inappropriate method of communication between the two governments, for being an unnecessary expense on the Iraqi budget, and for the “risk that members of it might get into mischief.”¹²³

When the MacDonald administration, limited in its legislative maneuver both by the sudden and almost accidental manner in which it found itself in office as well as the anticipated brevity of its term, failed to live up to its long standing promises to revolutionize British policy toward Iraq, outspoken critic of British policy in Iraq Commander Joseph Kenworthy characteristically confronted MacDonald on the matter in the plainest terms, inquiring in Parliament in mid-February “whether he contemplates any change in or modification of the policy pursued by the last Government.”¹²⁴ MacDonald assured Kenworthy that his government was doing everything in its power to address “the obligations imposed by the Mandate on the one hand and of the undesirability of remaining in Iraq any longer than is necessary to set the Arab Government on its own feet.” In other words, argued Conservative MP Edward Wood with an air of satisfaction, “the right hon. Gentleman is pursuing exactly the policy of the late Government.”¹²⁵ Whether ‘tamed’ by the responsibilities of office or limited by the brevity of a term won on a technicality, the Iraqi press would be forced, along with Kenworthy and the many critics of the first MacDonald administration, to accept the meager contribution toward complete independence Labour was able to make in 1924. Nevertheless, the advent of a Labour government did not fail entirely to impact Anglo-Iraqi relations.

Once the Residency came to terms with the limited maneuver Labour would have in office, it was surmised that “the agitation into which all intelligent persons in Iraq were

¹²³ Minute by Shuckburgh January 25, 1924. *NA, CO/730/57/3931*.

¹²⁴ *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 18 February 1924 vol 169 cc1311-2

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

thrown by the rumours of a change of policy” under a Labour government also held the potential to “strengthen the hands of the High Commissioner in seeing through the various subsidiary agreements which still await the acceptance of the Iraq Government,” though there remained “no sign of any yielding of points which they consider vital to the future of Iraq.”¹²⁶ As a series of articles appearing in the *Baghdad Times* in late May illustrated, the Iraqi identification of British Labour with eminent evacuation might be turned to advantage if the threat of evacuation could be made to seem as real and the fallout it would bring as clear as possible. On May 19, the *Baghdad Times* admitted that it had become clear “to the meanest intelligence” that the Treaty was uniformly disliked throughout Iraq. The writer asked, however, why the Assembly didn’t then “pluck up their courage and vote quickly in accordance with the wishes of the people... and reject the Treaty, and have done with it.” The British government and the British people, Iraqis were assured, would prefer Iraqis reject the Treaty and permit them to finally evacuate a region of no imperial advantage and with no appreciation of British efforts to set them on their own feet. The article described Iraq as characterized by backwardness and an economically destitute region with no trade advantages other than its oil potential, “but there is plenty of oil elsewhere to be got with less risk of loss.”¹²⁷ On May 21, the *Baghdad Times* illustrated how the evacuation of Iraq would benefit the British in almost every aspect of its foreign and colonial relations, again inviting the Assembly to reject the Treaty and release the British from their obligations.¹²⁸ Subsequent articles gave the

¹²⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 3, February 7, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹²⁷ *Baghdad Times*, May 19, 1924.

¹²⁸ *Baghdad Times*, May 21, 1924.

economic advantages of evacuation and suggested that the many problems and expense of Iraqi to the British may be turned over to Italy, who badly wanted the mandate.¹²⁹

Even *al Iraq*, the most pro-Treaty paper in publication, referred to the *Baghdad Times* articles as intolerably offensive and “extremist in the views” it presented, rightly angering the Iraqi public. The attention of the Assembly to the details of the Treaty was not, as the *Baghdad Times* seemed to suggest, “a sign of backwardness.” Iraq, “like all progressive and civilized countries is greatly interested in so vital a matter and regards it as a sacred right that a matter such as this should be fully and freely discussed.”¹³⁰

Somewhat less heated in its reply, *al Alam al Arabi* warned the *Baghdad Times*, “do not say that the Iraq is backward lest one may reply to you why haven’t you helped her on a little on the road of progress during the years you have been here. Do not say that the Iraqis are a people impossible to please lest one may reply, what is there to be pleased or grateful for?”¹³¹ Either undeterred by the *Baghdad Times*’ threats or succumbing to the pressure of popular will, on May 20 the Constituent Assembly advised the Cabinet that ratification of the Treaty be permitted only with certain amendments, including the abrogation of the capitulations, declaration of complete independence of Iraq, the elimination of Residency interference in managing the Iraqi budget, the immediate transfer of all public works to the Iraqi government, and the empowerment of the Iraqi government over its military, among a number of other amendments.¹³² The following day, the Residency upped the stakes with a prepared ultimatum that was simultaneously submitted to Faysal and the League of Nations that, if the Treaty was not ratified without

¹²⁹ *Baghdad Times*, May 23 and 24, 1924.

¹³⁰ *al Iraq*, May 23, 1924.

¹³¹ *al Alam al Arabi*, May 23, 1924.

¹³² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11, May 29, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

amendment by the next meeting of the League of Nations on June 10, an alternative form of administration for Iraq would need to be found, meaning evacuation.¹³³

On May 29, the day the Assembly was to debate the findings of the report, around half of the shops in Baghdad were closed in protest and an anti-Treaty demonstration of around three hundred people got underway at the entrance to the Assembly House in response to calls from the Iraqi press. Demonstrators shouted threats at the delegates as they entered the House, stones were thrown and several delegates were assaulted. When the demonstrators attempted to force their way into the Assembly, the Iraqi police and British cavalry undertook to disperse the crowd, which broke in a panic after a series of shots were exchanged from both sides. A series of Assembly meetings followed in the days leading up to the June 10 deadline at which anti-Treaty speeches predominated and no quorum was reached.¹³⁴ Contrary to the assumption of the Iraqis and most historians, however, it was not Dobbs who stood unflinching in the face of the increasingly desperate pleas for more time from Constituent Assembly leaders,¹³⁵ but MacDonald's Secretary of State for the Colonies James Henry Thomas.¹³⁶ Dobbs, in fact, caved in just under a week before the deadline, requesting permission to authorize Faysal to dissolve the Assembly and ratify the Treaty by Royal *Irrada* in the event of the Assembly's refusal to do so. In reply, Thomas expressed his doubt that Faysal "could find a Cabinet prepared to support him" in Iraq in the wake of such a move or that the MacDonald government could even defend it at home. Rather, Thomas instructed Dobbs that "nothing further should be done... to forestall the action that may be taken by the Iraq

¹³³ Ireland, p. 398.

¹³⁴ For a full account of the process of ratification, see Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12, June 12, 1924. *NA, FO/371/10098*

¹³⁵ Neither Ireland, Sluglett, nor Dodge make mention of Labour's influence in the matter of the Treaty.

¹³⁶ Sluglett and Ireland, pp.

Assembly in regard to the Treaty. If they mean to reject the Treaty they must be left to do so.” Any attempt to force the ratification of the Treaty, Thomas argued, would place the British “in a false position,” contrary to “what we have said to the League and published to the world.”¹³⁷ Unable to end the mandate from London, the MacDonald administration, it would seem, tested its ability, and the will of the Iraqi people, to end it from Baghdad.

After weeks of desperate negotiations and stubborn refusals that utterly polarized the political landscape of Baghdad, with the final appeal for more time being made at 10pm on June 10, a minimum quorum of 69 delegates drawn entirely from the pro-government party was achieved and with a vote of 37 to 24, the Treaty was ratified at, literally, the twelfth-hour. The approval was qualified with the statement, however, that the delegates viewed the articles of the Treaty as “so severe that Iraq would be unable to discharge the responsibilities of the alliance desired by the people of Iraq” and that the delegates put their faith and trust in the honor of the British government to “amend with all possible speed” the problematic aspects of the Treaty after its ratification.¹³⁸

The failure of the Labour government to live up to its promises to take a more direct role in liberating Iraq, and the British people, from the mandate was not lost on the House and not least of all Kenworthy, who interrogated Thomas in the House on July 24 as to the manner in which the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty had been passed. When Thomas confirmed that a mere 36 out of 110 delegates voted to ratify the Treaty, Kenworthy reminded Thomas of the importance of having a substantial minority present in such

¹³⁷ Report of an interview with Secretary of State for the Colonies James Thomas by Maj. Young, June 03, 1924. *NA, CO/730/60/26555*.

¹³⁸ For a full account of the process of ratification, see Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12, June 12, 1924. *NA, FO/371/10098*

decisions. Thomas reminded Kenworthy that “there are very important questions discussed in this House when few Members are present” and that, not having been there, it was impossible for him to give an explanation as to why so few Iraqi deputies were in attendance.¹³⁹ Kenworthy took the opportunity of a preliminary discussion of the Treaty in the House on July 29 to fully vent his opposition on the matter. Like Lloyd George before them, the Labour government was attempting to slide Iraqi policy past the House without proper discussion or approval. Neither had Labour done anything to alter the policy of Lloyd George, he noted that estimates had not been reduced, air raids were still being permitted to terrorize Iraqi villages into submission, and the overall approach to managing Anglo-Iraqi relations remained decidedly unconstitutional. Although the government had offered no clear explanation as to the passage of the Treaty in Iraq, Kenworthy had surmised from various reports that the Constituent Assembly had been clearly unwilling to ratify it, and that Dobbs’ ultimatum had sent Iraqi statesmen “scouring the streets of Baghdad in the middle of the night” to assemble a minority willing to vote in favor of the Treaty and, even then, only being able to get the barest of a majority of them to do so.¹⁴⁰ The degree of power vested in British officials to over-determine economic, military, and political life in Iraq, Kenworthy declared, was “disgraceful” and meant that “from the first to the last there is no sort of independence at all.” Those who would try to describe Iraq as “a separate independent political entity,”

¹³⁹ *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 14 July 1924 vol 176 cc18-9.

¹⁴⁰ *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 29 July 1924 vol 176 cc 1929.

he suggested, “must have an extraordinary idea of what is independence and what is separation. There is no independence at all.”¹⁴¹

Reactions to the Labour government’s handling of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty were mixed in the Iraqi press. Although the coercive manner in which the barest minimum of support for the Treaty had been obtained was “not hid from the eyes of any one” in Iraq, according to *al Istiqlal*, “the words of Commander Kenworthy have come to be the best evidence... that God has wished to reveal its secret” to the British people as well.¹⁴² *Al Mufid* was less celebratory of the Commander’s passionate objections to the Treaty, noting that, “as for Kenworthy, is not it well known that there is a big party in England which regrets that the British Government has not got out of the Iraq and would have liked the rejection of the treaty?”¹⁴³ In any event, *al Mufid* pointed out, the promise of a Labour government had certainly proven less than expected, as “Mr. MacDonald has changed his views considerably under the responsibility of office.”¹⁴⁴

One area of British policy in Iraq that the MacDonald administration kept its promises more clearly, however, was in turning the fate of Mosul and the Iraqi mandate over to the League of Nations when Anglo-Turkish negotiations reached a stalemate on August 6 1924. Having attacked the Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin administrations’ dangerous provocation of an Anglo-Turkish war for years over the settlement of the Smyrna and then the Mosul questions, as Peter Beck has shown,

¹⁴¹ *The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series)* 29 July 1924 vol 176 cc 1934-35. Hasani also offers an account of Kenworthy’s criticisms in his history of the Iraqi Cabinets, ‘Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat Al-‘Iraqiyah* (Sayda: Matba‘at al-‘Irfan, 1953), pp. 191.

¹⁴² *al Istiqlal* August 4, 1924.

¹⁴³ *al Mufid*, August 22, 1924.

¹⁴⁴ *al Mufid*, August 9, 1924.

MacDonald took a personal interest in reaching a negotiated settlement with Turkey, pushing the nine-month limit of those negotiations well past the deadline before finally turning the matter over the League.¹⁴⁵ Although MacDonald responded to Mustafa Kemal's belligerent saber rattling and even occupation of parts of the Mosul *vilayet* in the fall of 1926 with threats of air raids and even war, he ultimately backed down, choosing instead to request a special commission from the League to look into the frontier clashes as specified by international law. By turning the matter of Mosul's ultimate destiny as well as Turkish belligerence over to the League and committing the British government to honoring the League's determination, MacDonald not only vindicated his Party's commitment to internationalism, but, according to Beck, he imbued the League with legitimacy as an institution of international peace keeping and arbitration.¹⁴⁶

The continued ambiguity of the status of Mosul posed a complicated problem for the British government and the Residency in the fall of 1924. The Residency and the British government both believed that the election of an Iraqi Parliament and the completion of negotiations for oil concessions in Mosul that promised to kick-start the Iraqi economy would go some way to influencing the League's decision in the matter of Mosul in their favor. Accordingly, a few days before the Mosul question was turned over to the League, the Iraqi Constituent Assembly completed the task for which it had been appointed by approving, but not yet promulgating, an Electoral Law that would permit Parliamentary elections to commence. As managing director of the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) H. E. Nichols pointed out to the Foreign Office that July, however, the

¹⁴⁵ Peter J. Beck, "'A Tedious and Perilous Controversy': Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926.," *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.17, No.2 (1981), pp. 261.

¹⁴⁶ Beck, pp. 271.

speedy advent of an Iraqi Parliament was not necessarily a good thing all around. It was imperative, in fact, Nichols argued, that the TPC oil concession be passed before the advent of an Iraqi Parliament or, in any event, before the promulgation of the long awaited Iraqi Organic Law specifically because the articles of that document forbade the signing of any mineral concessions over three years without approval from the Iraqi Legislative Assembly. In other words, if the oil concession desired by the TPC and its primary share holder, the British government, was not obtained before the Organic Law was promulgated, the TPC would face indeterminate delays as the process of electing a Parliament commenced which would then have the freedom to either reject the concessions or, worse still, grant them to another entity.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, with Labour in office, the Mosul question at the League of Nations, and an election about to commence in Iraq,¹⁴⁸ one Foreign Office official minuted, it would be “very undesirable that the oil question should receive publicity or should form the subject of intrigues... at the present time. His Majesty’s Government have succeeded so far in keeping the oil issue out of the Turkey-Irak frontier settlement, and... it would be most undesirable to depart from this precedent.”¹⁴⁹ In other words, the matter of passing the TPC concession was one of the utmost delicacy and one requiring the speediest and least publicized of solutions.

The Iraqi politician Faysal and the Residency selected for the delicate work of ferrying through the TPC concession before the election of the Parliament in the immediate wake of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty passage was Yasin al Hashimi, whom Faysal

¹⁴⁷ Nicholes to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 16, 1924. *NA, FO/371/10084/E6167*.

¹⁴⁸ For the Foreign Offices consideration of this trifecta of influences, see Major Young memo p. 4 of *NA, FA 371/10162* and p. 34 *NA, CO 730/63*

¹⁴⁹ Memorandum signed by Todd July 2, 1924. *NA, FO/371/10084*. For a discussion of the sensitivity of British statesmen and officials to oil as a political factor, see Peter J. Beck, “A Tedious and Perilous Controversy: Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926,” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.17, No.2 (1981): 256-276.

asked to form a cabinet on August 2, 1924, the day the Constituent Assembly was dissolved.¹⁵⁰ Although Yasin Pasha had been an officer under Faysal during the Arab Revolt and a member of his government in Damascus, Faysal had been reluctant to call him back to Iraq precisely for his tendency toward aggressive self-empowerment. When Yasin did return in 1923, he characteristically cultivated his relationships both with the Palace and with the 'extremist' opposition alike. By the summer of 1924, Yasin had so ensconced himself in both the Sherifian court and the 'extreme nationalist' circles that, at the height of the Treaty debate in April, he was able to force the Iraqi Cabinet's permission for the cancelled 'lawyer's group' meeting on April 17th that he himself had been involved in organizing and even spoke at. Knowing that Yasin's true loyalties were to his own interests, Faysal invited him to form a government that could approve the Treaty in May, which Yasin refused to do because, he claimed, the suspicion that he had been bribed to accept the Treaty would ruin his popular credibility.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, Yasin reportedly made an offer to Dobbs in the following weeks guaranteeing the passage of the Treaty in exchange for the ousting of both Faysal as King and his Prime Minister, the Sherifian loyalist Ja'far al Askari, which Dobbs refused.¹⁵² The value of Yasin's mastery at playing both sides of the political spectrum, however, overrode Faysal's fear of his ambition in the weeks following the approval of the Treaty, however, and on August 2, he was offered the Premiership once again as the most promising choice to push the TPC concession through without drawing the opprobrium of the Iraqi public.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ For a thematic account of the Yasin al Hashimi Cabinet, see Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat*, pp. 197-234

¹⁵¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 10, May 15, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁵² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 15, July 24, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁵³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 15, July 24, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

As anticipated, when Yasin's Cabinet submitted its program, it received near universal approval.¹⁵⁴ The Residency described the program, which included "putting the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty into precise application," despite the fact that Yasin had been among the most vehement opponents of the Treaty, as being "generally considered to be the best programme that has as yet been issued by any Iraqi Cabinet."¹⁵⁵ *Al Iraq* characteristically expressed its agreement with the Residency's sentiment.¹⁵⁶ Ibrahim Hilmi's *al Mufid*, which the Residency had chosen to subsidize in exchange for articles friendlier to its agenda rather than continue to suppress it, also praised the program, drawing particular attention to its emphasis on cooperation between the Iraqi and British governments and the upholding the Treaty.¹⁵⁷

al Istiqlal, described by the Residency as "the organ of Yasin Pasha, or at least to be entirely submissive to his wishes" on the day of Yasin's appointment as Prime Minister¹⁵⁸ acknowledged that, like Yasin himself, it had been among "the first to reject [the Treaty]."¹⁵⁹ Now that the Treaty had become "an accomplished fact," however, *al Istiqlal* directed the attention of Iraqis to the shortcomings of previous administrations that had made the Treaty a *fait accompli*, in addition to the brutal suppression of Iraqi

¹⁵⁴ Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Wizarat*, pp. 198.

¹⁵⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17, August 21, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁵⁶ *al Iraq*, August 9, 1924. NA, CO/730/61/635

¹⁵⁷ Plant to ASI, July 30, 1926. NA, AIR/23/264. Butti also notes *al Mufid*'s support for the Treaty at this point, but views this as merely the editors personal perspective. Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁸ The Residency also identified *al Istiqlal* as the potential organ of Ja'far abu Timman's reorganization of the "two extremist parties" Hisb al Watani and Hisb al Nadhdhah in November of 1923 into a single grouping under the auspices of al Ahd, with which *al Istiqlal* had also been identified as a primary mouthpiece, Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 22, November 15, 1923. *al Istiqlal* is also noted to have pushed for the Premiership of Yasin with the fall of the Abdul Mushin Beg cabinet in late 1923, Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 23. December 1, 1923. So the notion that *al Istiqlal* was the "organ of Yasin Pasha" seems to be an assumption based on *al Istiqlal*'s willingness to get behind politicians that seemed to be in agreement with *al Istiqlal*'s own program for independence and not vice versa. Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17 August 4, 1924

¹⁵⁹ *al Istiqlal*, August 4, 1924.

nationalist sentiment,¹⁶⁰ as well as to the future in which Yasin's administration was expected to bring an end to the dangerous course the development of Iraqi political life had been set upon.¹⁶¹

In seeming conformity with such expectations, Yasin opened his administration with a call for the formation of political parties in preparation for the election of an Iraqi Parliament, with the first applicants being his own favored group of Baghdadi lawyer activists.¹⁶² Although concerned to keep interference with Iraq's political formation to an absolute minimum, when the lawyers' party, Hisb al Ummah, applied for a formal license, the Residency's Criminal Investigations Department stepped in to block them, owing to the association of its members with anti-Treaty and anti-election agitation in the past. In their place, the Minister of the Interior granted, with the Residency's approval, the application of the Hisb al Sha'b as Iraq's second political party, a group that shared the Hisb al Ummah's program of "complete independence" for Iraq, free elections, and amending the Treaty, but maintained a closer alliance with the Palace through the leadership of Saiyid Muhammad Abdul Husain, the Chamberlain of the Palace and loyalist to Faysal.¹⁶³

al Istiqlal complained bitterly at the Residency's obstruction of the Hisb al Ummah, arguing that the "crime" for which they had "lost their civil rights" amounted to nothing more than "disagreeing with the views of the Cabinet." Concerning the legitimacy of their complaint that the stipulations of the Treaty for Iraq were "too heavy

¹⁶⁰ *al Istiqlal*, August 4, 1924.

¹⁶¹ *al Istiqlal*, August 14, 1924.

¹⁶² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17, August 21, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁶³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 19, September 18, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098 Butti refers to the Hisb al Sha'b as the first internal government party, along with and akin to the official government party Hisb al Taqaddam to come, but with more of a popular nationalist slant that would soon be exploited by Yasin al Hashimi who would make the party his own political vehicle and the foremost opposition to the Hisb al Taqaddam. See Rafail Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, pp. 101-103.

to be borne,” *al Istiqlal* directed its readers to go back to its earlier publications and “read the statements of Englishmen themselves in Parliament—do they deny what we said?”¹⁶⁴ Even without approval, however, the Residency observed with foreboding the advances of the Hisb al Ummah as the elections approached in November. Attracting many of the most articulate and vocal nationalist agitators and contributing writers to the Iraqi press, such as Shaikh Ahmad al Daud, Daud al Sa’di, and Qasim al Alawi, the Hisb canvassed widely for support across the nation, seeking to publically out and intimidate pro-British candidates and succeeding in stacking the Election Inspectors Committee of 12 with 10 party members, including known nationalist agitators such as *al Istiqlal* owner Abdul Ghafur al Badri, Yasin collaborator Naji Beg al Suwaidi and even to place Shaikh Ahmad al Daud as the Committee’s president.¹⁶⁵ Celebrating the victory, regular contributor to *al Istiqlal* Mahami Ali Mahmud compared Iraq to the occupied provinces of ancient Rome, in which political life was always dichotomized into the party representing the occupiers and the party, played in Iraq by the Hisb al Ummah, representing the popular indigenous opposition to those interests.¹⁶⁶

Other parties soon followed, comprised of special interests relating to property, ethnicity, or sectarian identity. *Al Istiqlal* criticized most alternatives to the Hisb al Ummah for attempting to factionalize the unified movement for complete independence they would need to achieve it. When Shi’a nationalists launched the Hisb al Nahdhah under the presidency of Abdul Razzaq al Sharif in December, purportedly out of fear that the predominantly Sunni led Hisb al Ummah would trample their rights if empowered in

¹⁶⁴ *al Istiqlal*, August 10 and 12, 1924.

¹⁶⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 24, November 27, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁶⁶ *al Istiqlal*, November 27, 1924.

office,¹⁶⁷ *al Istiqlal* warned that its leadership was, unlike the lawyerly Hisb al Ummah, nearly bereft of formal education or administrative experience and were driven to candidacy by a desire for position and wealth.¹⁶⁸ *Al Mufid*, in its turn, gave its support to the diversification of political groupings as reflecting the progress of Iraqi democracy and regenerating Shi'a identification with the Iraqi state.¹⁶⁹ More accustomed to appointment than election, the Sherifian court mobilized its own "moderate party" by January, the unpopular and short-lived Hisb al Islah under the presidency of the previous Prime Minister, Ja'far al Askari.¹⁷⁰

By the new year, the acceleration of political mobilization and proliferation of political groups had led to a political landscape the Residency described as "chaotic," with parties tending to "coalesce and disintegrate for personal reasons rather than political reasons."¹⁷¹ By the early spring of 1925, the Residency reported, the actual political struggle had devolved down to where it had began, with supporters of Yasin al Hashimi holding a loosely knit opposition to the subservience of the Arab government to the British and those of Ja'far al Askari tending to give their support to the King and strong Anglo-Iraqi ties.¹⁷² Although the convictions behind popular political mobilization remained very much the same, by the spring of 1925 they had become identified, for the first time in Iraqi history, with two opposed Iraqi politicians.

¹⁶⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 25, December 11, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁶⁸ *al Istiqlal*, December 2, 1924.

¹⁶⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 25, December 11, 1924. (587) and *al Mufid*, December 4, 1924. NA, CO/730/63/642

¹⁷⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 1 January 8, 1924. NA, FO/371/10097

¹⁷¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 26 December 25, 1924. NA, FO/371/10098

¹⁷² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 6, March 19, 1925. NA, FO/371/10833

During the entire period of Iraq's political mobilization over the fall of 1924 and spring of 1925, the Yasin Cabinet was quietly conducting negotiations with the Turkish Petroleum Company toward reaching a compromise before the completion of the elections threatened to force the matter in March. Near the end of February 1925, Secretary of State for the Colonies Leo Amery identified the heart of the delay as being the issue of control, with the Iraqi government refusing to sign any concession that did not give them a significant say in the management of the company and the TCP's "objection to any Iraq control of the policy of the Company." Indeed, as Nichols had informed him, the delicate and hard-won balance of influence between Dutch, French, American, and British companies sharing interest in the TCP simply had no place whatsoever for an additional controlling interest, be it Iraqi or otherwise. "If the admission of the Iraq Government to a share participation was accepted," Nichols told Amery, "the whole fabric of the Turkish Petroleum Company would be destroyed."¹⁷³ Yasin's willingness to accept a concession in which the Iraqi government would have absolutely no control or voice in the TCP, which he would do on March 15, 1925, and his ability to sell this concession to the Iraqi people would have been significantly more difficult if not for the arrival in Iraq of a League of Nations Frontier Commission to determine the status of Mosul that January.¹⁷⁴

From the moment Anglo-Turkish relations over the Mosul question collapsed in late July 1924, the Iraqi press had stressed to its readers that the matter had very little to

¹⁷³ Committee on Petroleum Policy in Iraq, February 27, 1925. NA, CAB/27/268/1-7. For a discussion of the Turkish Petroleum Company's composition and tensions relating to Iraq, see Stephen C. Pelletière, *Iraq and the International Oil System: Why America Went to War in the Gulf* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), pp. 26-38.

¹⁷⁴ For a discussion of the Frontier Commission's origins, mandate, and operations, see Berriedale A. Keith, "The League of Nations and Mosul," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, 3rd Ser. Vol.8, No.1 (1926), pp. 43-44.

do with their just claims to an Iraqi Mosul and everything to do with oil. *Al Alam al Arabi* and *al Istiqlal* had both offered exposes on European press coverage of the MacDonald administration's turning the matter over to the League illustrating the predominance of oil in its columns. It was "clear from all European papers," *al Istiqlal* wrote, "that the only interest felt abroad in the Iraq is on account of the oil."¹⁷⁵ In October, coinciding with the arrival of a British delegation to inspect the Mosul oil fields, *al Alam al Arabi* announced that "the hour has approached and the nation must awake," arguing that as "the English Syndicates have put up all that they possess of power, influence, money and men to enter into the Petrol Struggle on the fields of Iraq" the Iraqi people must endeavor to ensure that "Government and people should reap the ripe fruits of the struggle."¹⁷⁶ Similarly *al Istiqlal* declared that it had become obvious that that "Britain controls the Iraq merely for the sake of oil," that many "European nations have become rich on oil," and that "Iraq independence can not be gained unless her mineral resources are well handled" through competitive concessions, rather than 'most-privileged-nation' agreements.¹⁷⁷

The press reflected a kind of bewildered disbelief when the League announced at the end of September 1924 that a Frontier Commission would be sent to Iraq. *Al Mufid* declared, however, that "no one is afraid of [the Frontier Commission] because all are sure of the feelings of the population" of Mosul.¹⁷⁸ *Al Iraq* took the opportunity to chide opponents of the Treaty, noting that the British had come to their defense and "carried out the full principle of that treaty which was much criticized here by people of obscured

¹⁷⁵ *al Istiqlal*, September 5, 1924. NA, CO/730/62/324. Also see *al Alam al Arabi*, July 30, 1924. NA, CO/730/60

¹⁷⁶ *al Alam al Arabi*, August 25, 1924.

¹⁷⁷ *al Istiqlal*, October 21, 1924.

¹⁷⁸ *al Mufid*, September 23, 1924.

understanding.”¹⁷⁹ As a result of British efforts, *al Iraq* assured its readers, “there can be no doubt as to [the Committee’s] decision... the matter is practically settled.”¹⁸⁰ *Al Istiqlal* was also confident, but more from the “specious arguments” of Turkey’s claim than British good faith. For, although both Britain and Turkey were out to “take possession of the oil of Mosul,” the British had the added advantage of the principle of nationality on their side, without which the Turkish case would “have no influence with the League of Nations,” which would base its decision on the will of the Mosuli people. In light of the obviousness of Mosul’s Iraqi identity, *al Istiqlal* speculated, “it is probable that the Commission may carry out its work by means of aeroplanes without mixing with the people at all.”¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, as the Commission’s arrival approached, both *al Mufid* and *al Iraq* advocated peaceful public demonstrations, speeches, and newspaper articles to express “the national feeling about Mosul,” and even the organization of an Iraqi delegation to bring those views to the doorsteps of Europeans.¹⁸²

When the Commission began its investigations in January 1925, a series of open letters appeared in the Iraqi press identifying the decision as one of significant international magnitude that would have far reaching implications for the global awakening in which the League of Nations and Iraq has both played such a crucial role. In a letter to the Commission published on January 12, *al Mufid* described Iraq as an ancient epicenter of global wisdom and learning shut off from global progress by the forces of tyranny. Iraqis, the writer pleaded, now looked to the coming of the League of Nations to Iraq to end the age of oppression and open the way to reviving Iraq’s

¹⁷⁹ *al Iraq*, October 4, 1924.

¹⁸⁰ *al Iraq*, October 6, 1924.

¹⁸¹ *al Istiqlal*, December 16, 1924.

¹⁸² *al Iraq*, December 17, 1924.

contribution to the progress of the world. The *raison d'état* of the League, *al Mufid* reasoned, was precisely to lift such peoples as the Iraqis from beneath the heavy hand of foreign tyranny, under which they still lived.¹⁸³ *Al Mufid* assured Iraqis that the members of the Commission “belonged also to small countries which strove for their rights and they know the evils left by foreign rule.”¹⁸⁴ The internationalist rhetoric that had characterized the Iraqi press in the wake of the 1920 rising also returned to its pages, with *al Mufid* noting that “when the war ended, the voice of humanity was heard and the lovers of humanity proclaimed the liberation of the weak. The civilized nations have declared that they will defend the equality and rights of all nations. Those who were oppressed rejoiced and the Arab nation welcomed this new age.” No longer was national identity a question of size or power, *al Mufid* insisted, but of “independence and life” awakened in so many subjugated peoples after the war.¹⁸⁵

al Istiqlal directed its letter to the Turkish delegates of the Commission. Greeting the delegates “as Easterners to Easterners” and Iraq’s former imperial governors “until the national awakening separated us,” *al Istiqlal* extended a hand of welcome. The welcome was qualified with the rebuke, however, that, in her good fortune, Turkey had proven unsatisfied with the extent of her lands, disrespectful of “the rights of neighbours” and covetous of Iraqi oil. *Al Istiqlal* recognized that “this is the age of oil and wrong is clothed in the dress of right,” but pledged that the indisputable fact of Mosul’s historic identification as one of the triad of Ottoman *vilayets* that had comprised the land known as Iraq for centuries would be recognized and Turkish deception exposed.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ *al Mufid*, January 12, 1925.

¹⁸⁴ *al Mufid*, January 15, 1925.

¹⁸⁵ *al Mufid*, January 18, 1925.

¹⁸⁶ *al Istiqlal*, January 19, 1925.

al Iraq also published a letter, its being directed to the Iraqi people. It was imperative that Iraqis present to the Commission “a picture of complete solidarity and unity of Iraq” as well as a driving desire toward “progress and organization” among a people “worthy of the complete independence toward which [Iraq] is moving.” The key was to emphasize how far Iraq had come from the desolation under the Turks in so short a time.¹⁸⁷ Enumerating the progress of Iraqs, *al Iraq* described “the endeavour of its people” to live “under a Constitutional regime,” the obvious fact that “[Iraqis] had been awakened by their connection with civilized countries and by reading the papers,” the effort of the Iraqi people “to liberate themselves from Turkish rule.” As a result of these efforts, “the Iraqi... now rules himself,... can follow the path he judges... express his opinions freely on the principles of social live... feels himself to be a member of a nation known as one of the independent states,” and looks forward to the day when “the voice of Iraq will be heard by civilized states... these are the gifts of the Constitutional regime which the people have attained.”¹⁸⁸

On January 27, the newly emerging political party in Mosul, Hisb al Istiqlal, published its second edition of *al Ahd* with a letter to the Iraqi people and to the Commission. Building off the Hisb al Istiqlal’s founding statement in the previous issue, *al Ahd* emphasized the transition underway in which subjugated peoples around the world were awakening as nations and standing against the continuation of tyranny as the Iraqis experienced under the Ottomans. Whereas Iraqis had lent their voice to those of the Egyptians, Syrians and others in ‘making their national claims known to the world,’ Iraqis now had the distinct opportunity of “receiving in our own country the Commission

¹⁸⁷ *al Iraq*, January 13, 1925.

¹⁸⁸ *al Iraq*, January 16, 1925.

to which our rights should be exposed.” The moment had arrived in which Iraqis could declare to the League, and through the League the world, their desire and preparedness for a ‘completely independent’ national existence and intention to “reject all foreign Government whatever it may be.” To the Commission, *al Ahd* declared that “we do not know of the existence of the Mosul question” in Mosul, for “Mosul has always been Arab” and Turkish rule always representative of the tyrannical and anti-democratic rule the League is organized to oppose.¹⁸⁹ Leaders then followed “exposing the designs of the Turks,” their object being “not to regain Mosul but to obtain possession of the oil.”¹⁹⁰

Perhaps to gain advantage in the negotiations over the Concession for the Yasin administration, *al Istiqlal* raised the stakes in mid-February by directly exposing the relationship between the delays in the oil concession and those in promulgating the Organic Law and completing the elections.¹⁹¹ *Al Istiqlal* warned the negotiators that Iraqis would not tolerate the “sale of their birthright for a mess of pottage.” *Al Istiqlal* noted that the assumption that the TPC would get a concession for the whole of Iraq regardless of competition was dispelled somewhat when negotiations went quiet “following the coming into power of the Labour Government.” Now that Baldwin was in power, however, “the negotiations have found fresh vigour.”¹⁹² In the interests of the people, democracy, and constitutionalism, *al Istiqlal* supported Shaikh Ahmad Daud and Naji Beg Suwaidi’s move to suspend the negotiations until after the Parliament had been

¹⁸⁹ *al Ahd*, January 27, 1925.

¹⁹⁰ *al Ahd*, January 29, 1925.

¹⁹¹ *al Istiqlal*, February 11, 1925.

¹⁹² *al Istiqlal*, February 12, 1925.

elected and could express its opinion on the matter.¹⁹³ In all developed nations, *al Istiqlal* argued, the constitution is the foundational document of the state. Already, Iraqis had been made to accept a series of treaties, laws, and elections with profound implications for Iraq's future as a state without the benefit and protection of a constitution, which the government refused to publish, let alone promulgate. Now Iraqis were being made to accept their foremost natural resource being "put secretly to tender, not to open auction" as a prerequisite for the promulgation of the constitution. The Iraqi nation, *al Istiqlal* insisted "fears the execution of laws embracing vast schemes designed to strip Iraq of what riches remain to her,"

All Constitutions provide that all laws involving financial obligations must pass through and come from the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover the Iraq Government has only been created on condition that it shall be constitutional and representative... any law which embraces financial provisions cannot be held to be legal unless it comes from the Chamber... the Government cannot therefore grant... oil concessions without the consent of the Chamber of Deputies. the future Chamber will have strong grounds for cancelling all such concessions if granted. Any Ministry which attempts to pass into law concessions... before the summoning of the Parliament... will not be able to escape from the responsibility when the Parliament meets.¹⁹⁴

al Mufid presented the example of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company as a warning, noting that "the Persian Government gets so little benefit from it that it does not cover the expense of maintaining local order while the Company is getting 4 millions a year. We want reciprocal benefits." Delaying the concession until the Parliament could be elected and meet to express its opinion would be "sound policy,"¹⁹⁵ while the postponement of the constitution until after the concession had been made was "a matter of common

¹⁹³ *al Istiqlal*, February 13, 1925.

¹⁹⁴ *al Istiqlal*, February 15, 1925.

¹⁹⁵ *al Mufid*, February 11, 1925.

indignation.”¹⁹⁶ Citing articles from the British press, *al Alam al Arabi* argued in late February that Mosul was being “ransomed at a double price.” Already, Iraqis had been made to compromise their rights in the name of national integrity by ratifying an otherwise unacceptable Treaty. Now, on the verge of electing their first Parliament, Iraqis were being subjected to the greedy haggling of “many powerful States who are not friendly but merely want to get the wealth of the country at their own terms and by threats.”¹⁹⁷

On March 9, however, the tone shifted with an interview with Yasin published in *al Istiqlal* in which the Prime Minister explained the details of the concession he had negotiated, its benefits to Iraq, and the reasons for the rush. The issue, he argued, was not merely economic, but political. His administration did not wait for the completion of the elections and assembly of Parliament because they “were afraid to lose a valuable political opportunity... to assert our right to [Mosul].” Nevertheless, he illustrated, by signing the concession, his government had secured a minimum of £850,000 per year, a guarantee that the price of oil in Iraq would be one third of the market price in Europe, and the right to negate the concession should the TPC fail to “work the oil fully.”¹⁹⁸ *Al Mufid* similarly noted on March 8 that “the Hashimi Cabinet was confronted with difficulties rather political than economic. The fate of Mosul depended on the Treaty and the oil concession. Therefore the Cabinet like the previous Cabinet was obliged to sacrifice some benefits to obtain the principle interest in the north where danger threatened the country.”¹⁹⁹ On March 3, a new paper covering political issues, *al Siyasa*,

¹⁹⁶ *al Mufid*, February 15, 1925.

¹⁹⁷ *al Alam al Arabi*, February 28, 1925.

¹⁹⁸ *al Istiqlal*, March 9, 1925.

¹⁹⁹ *al Mufid*, March 8, 1925.

published its first issue, proclaiming its service to “the Arabs and the whole Orient” along with the recognition that “the regeneration of the East cannot be achieved by the awakening of one country only; all must arise and awake together.” The paper promised to work toward that end. *Al Siyasah* also acknowledged the international parameters of the oil concession, explaining that, if the Iraqi government had refused the concession, the Turkish government might well have promised the TPC the concession in exchange for its influence with the League in getting a settlement of the Mosul question in Turkey’s favor. As it stood, the British, French, American, and Dutch owners of the TPC “had friends in the League who will take up their view.” The Hashimi Cabinet, in the view of *al Siyasah*, was wise to make such an alignment, and “besides... it appears that the share of Iraq will be more than the share of Persia in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.” Just as the Askari Cabinet had “passed the Treaty to save Mosul,” so had the Hashimi Cabinet “sacrificed some economic advantages to avoid the dismemberment of the country.”²⁰⁰

On March 15, the halting negotiations that had characterized the spring of 1925 came to an end in a concession agreement between the Yasin administration and the TPC in which the Iraqi government would receive no control over the TPC what so ever.²⁰¹ In less than a week of that signing, the Organic Law was promulgated and preparations for the Parliamentary elections begun in earnest.²⁰² On the very day the oil concessions were approved by Yasin, *al Istiqlal* reflected a clear shift away from its support for the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty with a series of articles reiterating the argument that every legislative act

²⁰⁰ *al Siyasah*, March 3 and 7, 1925.

²⁰¹ Committee on Petroleum Policy in Iraq, February 27, 1925. NA, CAB/27/268/22.

²⁰² Ireland, p. 371.

dating back to the coronation of Faysal, according to Ali Muhamud, the Iraqi government had been referred to as “a constitutional representative democratic government established in accordance with the Organic Law.” The British government had undertaken to conclude a treaty with Iraq and to persuade the League of Nations to admit Iraq to membership, neither of which would have been appropriate for a “dependent state.” For all intents and purposes, the Ali Muhamud concluded, the British government had long recognized the independence of Iraq, a fact that would be difficult to dispute should Iraqis choose not to ratify the Treaty in the end.²⁰³ Accordingly, Ali Mahmud followed up, Iraqis should challenge the legitimacy of the Treaty and ask themselves, for example,

why is the signature of the Plenipotentiary of Britain over that of the Plenipotentiary of Iraq... why the foreign representation in Article V is restricted by the approval of HBM to the representatives of foreign powers... why is His Britannic Majesty represented by a High Commissioner whereas he should be represented by an Ambassador as in the case of independent states... why is the appointment of non-Iraqi officials restricted by the consent of His Britannic Majesty? All of these threaten our independence.²⁰⁴

Shortly thereafter, *al Istiqlal* published an annotated list of its nominations for the Parliament, citing such qualifications as high standing as a lawyer, a history of opposition to either the Treaty or the oil concessions, having been involved in other historic forms of opposition to the British or the mandate or, in the case of Abul Ghafur al Badri, because he was the publisher of *al Istiqlal*.²⁰⁵ The Residency, for its part, had been keeping close tabs such sentiment, with Special Security Officers reporting that the Hisb al Ummah had been secretly gathering and conspiring to use the elections as a throughway for the overthrow of Faysal and his “Hedjazi Government” and its self-interested ministers for

²⁰³ *al Istiqlal*, April 15, 1925.

²⁰⁴ *al Istiqlal*, April 16, 1925.

²⁰⁵ *al Istiqlal*, April 28, 1925.

“selling the country to the English” and to replace it with a ‘government of the people.’²⁰⁶

On July 15, however, Iraqis celebrated the completion of the elections and the impending formation of Iraq’s first Parliament. With his role for the Palace and the Residency completed, however, Yasin found his political maneuver being increasingly constrained by Faysal.²⁰⁷ When a new Cabinet was called for upon the completion of the elections, Yasin was replaced by Sherifian loyalist Abdul Mushin Beg Sa’dun now also the president of a new ‘moderate party,’ the Hisb al Taqaddam largely representing the views and policies of the Palace in which around half of the newly elected Deputies joined.²⁰⁸

On the day the Parliament was elected, the now unsubsidized *al Mufid* warned its readers

not to be deceived nor deceive ourselves into thinking that we are free and that our representatives and our parliament are like the parliaments of England and France or Belgium even though it may have an external resemblance. Let us not be deceived by such an illusion... the power of our parliament is limited and restricted by foreign influences.²⁰⁹

Even *al Iraq*, though identifying itself as having been “one of the strongest supporters of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty” seemed to sense a shift in political thinking about the amendments that it and supporters and detractors of the Treaty alike had been clamoring for in expressing its “astonishment at the dilatory way in which the question of amending these agreements, the harshness of which is admitted by the British government itself” was being address by the new government and Parliament.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ SSO Driver to Air Staff Intelligence March 30, 1925. NA, AIR/23/334

²⁰⁷ SSO Plant to Air Staff Intelligence July 15, 1925. NA, AIR/23/263/25

²⁰⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 15, July 16, 1925. Also see Amy Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 94-95

²⁰⁹ *al Mufid*, July 15, 1925.

²¹⁰ *al Iraq*, July 21, 1925.

Recognizing the turn in Yasin's fate, *al Alam al Arabi* followed its criticism of the Parliament as an 'aristocracy' of Iraqi wealth,²¹¹ with its call for Iraqi support for the speedy formation of a legitimate opposition party to Sa'dun's Hisb al Taqaddam, noting the importance of such an opposition to parliamentary democracies the world over.²¹² According to Special Security Officers, Yasin was already busily working towards this end by expanding his party base into Kurdish and Shi'a areas, promising, "in accordance with the 'Yasin Method' of promising all to everyone, according to SSO Foster Plant, that he would "do all in his power to obtain their much desired autonomy for them."²¹³ Nevertheless, the Residency reported on August 6 that the Parliament was characterized by a "spirit of businesslike and affectionate cooperation with British policy... Extremist parties have been submerged and everything points to the existence of a genuine desire among the bulk of the population for the support of Great Britain" though their remains and "will always remain the critical, vocal and discontented minority which would be against any government in power. The outlook for the future of Anglo-Iraqi relations is perhaps more promising than ever before."²¹⁴

The path to the final ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was made yet more complicated in December 1925, however, when the League of Nations finally released its decision to award Mosul to Iraq under the condition that the British government extend the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty from four to twenty-five years barring the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations before its expiration. The recognition of Mosul as part of Iraq was, for

²¹¹ *al Alam al Arabi*, July 9, 1925.

²¹² *al Alam al Arabi*, July 16 and 18, 1925.

²¹³ SSO Plant to Air Staff Intelligence August 1, 1925. NA, AIR/23/263/35

²¹⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 16. August 6, 1925. (89)

the press, a vindication of Iraq's legitimacy as a state at the international level.

Accordingly, the Residency reported a sense of general relief at the decision. The shock of the twenty-five year extension of the Treaty was tempered by its presentation to Iraqis as something of a formality or fail-safe demanded by the League of Nations made irrelevant by fact that Iraqi membership in the League would come, as many believed, within the span of a few years.²¹⁵ *Al Alam al Arabi*, for example, was "overjoyed" at the decision,²¹⁶ but inquired of the League of Nations decision to extend the Treaty, "have they discovered that we are really so backward as all that?"²¹⁷

al Mufid declared that "the nation is entitled to rejoice at the diplomatic triumph which it has achieved at Geneva," but that it had come at a "heavy cost," involving "the sacrifice of the greater part of the wealth of the country" through the recent TCP concessions, and "the binding of the freedom of the country and the placing of the Iraqi people in the position of a nation which continues still to bear the chains of slavery and degradation" through the oppressive Treaty.²¹⁸ In the "whole long course of history," *al Mufid* claimed, "we know of no case where a court has carried off a poor slave which it has ordered to be emancipated." The people of Iraq were advised to learn carefully this lesson and "not to be cowardly," but to "exert themselves to protect the rights of Iraq with the utmost bravery and the greatest daring."²¹⁹ The first consideration, for *al Mufid* was the new Treaty, "which the League has ordered should be made without consulting the wishes of the people of Iraq." Although *al Mufid* did not deny "the need for the help of a powerful nation... or refuse to recognize the backward condition of the country," it

²¹⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 26 December 18, 1925. NA, CO/730/105

²¹⁶ *al Alam al Arabi*, December 18, 1925.

²¹⁷ *al Alam al Arabi*, December 19, 1925.

²¹⁸ *al Mufid*, December 20, 1925.

²¹⁹ *al Mufid*, December 20, 1925.

also did not condone these as justifying “enslaving the nation.” For “an alliance based on mutual benefits is one thing and submission to foreign rule and entrance into the ranks of colonies is another thing.” *Al Mufid* criticized the Cabinet’s policy of “hiding all information from the Deputies, from the press, and from the enlightened elements of society” as destructive of public confidence. This feeling was compounded by the Iraqi Prime Minister’s admission that he had not seen the Treaty and the British Prime Minister’s promise to have a Treaty ratified by the Iraqi government by February 2. “The nation,” *al Mufid* declared, “will not forgive those who sacrifice the liberty of the nation for the sake of their rank and position.”²²⁰

al Istiqlal commented that “no Arab can consider the decision of the League of Nations without feeling both grief and joy at the same time.” The decision was just because it was based on evidence of popular sentiment and reflected the fact of Mosul’s Iraqi identity. It was lamentable, however, in that “the great efforts of Great Britain” had been made not for principles but for the retention of Iraqi oil and that the “conditions” attached to the Treaty by the League were “contrary to [Iraqi] aspirations and an obstacle to the complete freedom which they love.” *al Istiqlal* was particularly perturbed by the League’s reference to the mandate, “it appears that in the eyes of other nations the mandate still exists while we regard it as non-existent.”²²¹ For regardless of the undergirding principles, “mandates have in practice been used to carry on an administration in no way different from that usually set up in a colony or protected territory.”²²²

²²⁰ *al Mufid*, December 30, 1925.

²²¹ *al Istiqlal*, December 22, 1925.

²²² *al Istiqlal*, December 20, 1925.

The *Daily Herald* announced the League's decision with the statement, summarizing Labour opinion on it generally, that

the British Nation is now condemned against its will to govern a far-away territory in Asia for twenty-five years at a cost of several millions annually... War is a possibility. Continual friction with the Turks is almost certain... The inclusion in Irak of a large part of the Turkish province of Mosul... gives the whole business a buccaneering air, an Imperialist flavour, which the mass of the British People strongly dislike. Mr. Baldwin gave a pledge that our responsibility should end in 1927. Now it is to be prolonged until 1952.²²³

In its weekly notes for speakers, the ILP condemned the 'Mosul Mouse Trap' as opening the door to "another Egypt." To Amery's comment that the work in Iraq had been, "as fine a piece of work as that done by Lord Cromer in the early days of Egypt," ILP speakers were encouraged to remind their audiences that the occupation of Egypt was followed by fifteen years of war and the maintenance of British influence by brute force. At nearly £4 million per year, twenty-five years would prove a long and expensive occupation.²²⁴ For his part, MacDonald published an article on the decision in the *Daily Herald* stating that, in light of the financial obligations entailed and the threat of War with Turkey should the decision be rejected, "the agreement to continue our responsibilities for Irak for another 25 years is a blunder of the most serious kind."²²⁵

The National Council of the ILP, in its "alarm and indignation" at the decision, expressed its confidence at "the united and determined opposition of the whole Labour movement to this costly and dangerous policy of imperialism" and, reflecting back on its disappointment with the MacDonald's failure to act more aggressively against its predecessors Iraq policy and demanded that the "Labour Party declare in advance that it will not be bound in its dealing with Iraq by the undertakings which the present

²²³ *Daily Herald*, December 17, 1925.

²²⁴ Independent Labour Party, *Independent Labour Party Information Committee Weekly Notes for Speakers*, vol. 239 (Independent Labour Party Information Committee, 1925).

²²⁵ *Daily Herald*, December 19, 1925.

Government may assume,” in its next turn in office. Most importantly, however, the ILP demanded a “free vote in Parliament” over the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty once a draft had been produced.²²⁶

Both the demand for a free vote and opposition to the ratification of the Treaty among Labour propagandists built up over the month of December, as the end of the sessions for the winter approached.²²⁷ On December 21 in what were, quite literally, the final hours of Parliamentary sessions for 1925, Baldwin finally opened the floor of the House for debate over the approval of a fully drafted Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. MacDonald stood in protest, pointing out that “two or three hours debate on an issue which might conceivably involve grave developments was inadequate” and requesting “the withdrawal of the motion... permitting a general debate on the adjournment for the purpose of eliciting information from the Ministers.” When Baldwin summarily refused, the Labour Party walked out of Parliament *en mass* in protest.²²⁸ In the absence of Labour representatives, the resolution to ratify the Treaty was passed 239 to 4.

In the days following the approval of the Treaty in the British Parliament, Amery instructed Dobbs in Iraq to “impress on [Faysal] the paramount importance of concluding the treaty with the least possible delay.” Toward that end, Faysal, the Prime Minister, and through him the Iraqi Parliament were informed that the “various outstanding amendments” would not be included in the new Treaty, though they would be subject to later negotiation, and that “the League will be satisfied with nothing less than the terms of

²²⁶ Independent Labour Party, *I.L.P. Report of the Annual Conference held at Carlisle March-April, 1929* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1929).

²²⁷ See *Daily Herald* December 21, 1925.

²²⁸ *Daily Herald*, December 22, 1925. Also see Berriedale A. Keith, “The League of Nations and Mosul,” *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law*, 3rd Ser. Vol.8, No.1 (1926), p. 47-49.

the proposed treaty.” Any attempt even to criticize it from the Iraqi government, they were assured, “will have the worst possible effect both on the League and on His Majesty’s Government.”²²⁹ The Residency was confident, however, that Faysal was “genuinely determined to exert every effort to put [the Treaty] through without further argument once His Britannic Majesty’s Government have definitely decided upon its final form.”²³⁰ The trouble, the Residency anticipated, would come from the opposition. For though the opposition had accepted the twenty-five year extension of the Treaty, believing that League membership would come much sooner, it had insisted that the Treaty “be a *new treaty*,” that the Parliament be permitted “to examine its provisions with great care and to secure all possible concessions to both the dignity and the pocket of the State,” and that the Iraqi Cabinet ultimately take full responsibility for failing to secure such an agreement.²³¹

On January 13, 1926, Dobbs and Faysal signed the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty draft without revision. The next day, *al Mufid* declared “the future [as] shrouded in fearful darkness and doubts” and that it appeared that “Iraq is headed for destruction.” The Iraqi government, *al Mufid* inferred, was being intimidated by the British “so that the new treaty may be signed blindly.”²³² With *al Mufid*, *al Istiqlal* interpreted the silence of the Iraqi government on the impending Treaty debate against the backdrop of the cacophony in the European press over the impending Anglo-Turkey agreement to mean that “the new treaty contains clauses which will not be welcomed by the people.” No doubt, *al Istiqlal* suggested, “for obvious reasons which need no mention here it is impossible for

²²⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 26 December 24, 1925.

²³⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 1, January 7, 1926.

²³¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 1, January 7, 1926.

²³² *al Mufid*, January 14, 1926.

the Government of Iraq to oppose the making of this treaty, so that our Ministers are faced with a fait accompli. Will you, O Ministers, not receive from London a treaty to be accepted without amendment?"²³³ Challenging the logic and principles of the League over the matter, *al Istiqlal* inquired how anyone could reconcile the recognition of Mosul as being part of Iraq with the enforced imposition of a treaty "that destroys the independence and sovereignty of the country" the Mosul decision seemed to acknowledge. It was in the power of the British to make a treaty that did not demand Iraqis "forget our nationality nor relinquish our national rights," *al Istiqlal* insisted "we need an ally not a master."²³⁴

When the Treaty was laid before the Iraqi Parliament a few days later, Yasin, now the leader of the *Hisb al Sha'b*, echoed these arguments as well as the opposition of British Labour in their own Parliament in insisting that it should be referred to a special Parliamentary committee for review before it was debated by the Parliament as a whole. Yasin was informed by the Prime Minister, however, that he and 42 members of the *Hisb al Taqaddam*, the pro-government, and in important respects, pro-British party, had already tabled a petition demanding the Treaty be debated immediately, that the public be excluded from the House during the debate, and that the debate be closed and secret.²³⁵ As MacDonald and the British Labour Party had weeks before them over the same issue, Yasin and all 19 members of the opposition party walked out in protest. The 58 remaining Deputies, then excluded the public, debated for a little over an hour, and produced a unanimous vote for the acceptance of the Treaty.²³⁶

²³³ *al Istiqlal*, January 13, 1926.

²³⁴ *al Istiqlal*, January 17, 1926.

²³⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 2, January 21, 1926.

²³⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 2, January 21, 1926.

By the end of 1925, a nationalist opposition movement in Iraq, largely inspired by the Iraqi popular press, had organized into political parties with the Hisb al Sha'b at the forefront and begun to act as a collective force in the name of 'complete independence' upon the Residency, the Palace, and a political grouping of Iraqi 'moderates' identifying with the Hisb al Taqaddam's advocacy of a healthy cooperative relationship with the British in the name of long-term Iraqi stability. Over the course of the process of ratifying the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, Iraqi nationalist leaders had learned important lessons about the political power of mobilized popular opinion but also about the limits of that power. Although walking out of Parliament over the issue of the Treaty all but ensured that it would be ratified, denying the government even their oppositional vote against the Treaty also ensured that the stigma of coercion and compromise would be forever attached to it in the Iraqi imagination, along with the enduring patriotism of those who had rejected it and the undemocratic manner in which it had been passed.

al Istiqlal immediately cast the Hisb al Sha'b as the champions of democracy and constitutionalism and the Hisb al Taqaddam as both anti-democratic and recklessly self-serving in having ratified "a treaty which binds the future of Iraq for a quarter of a century... in half an hour."²³⁷ Hisb al Sha'b's new paper, *Nada al Sha'b*, appearing a few days after the debate, gave a detailed exposition of the many points about the treaty that should have been raised in debate, illustrating that there "was no fact, no reason why it should not have been discussed for at least a fortnight," but also that the House was not the only place in which such a debate could take place.²³⁸ With detailed discussions of

²³⁷ *al Istiqlal*, January 19, 1926.

²³⁸ *Nada al Sha'b*, January 20, 1926.

the Treaty in relation to past agreements, examples of other treaties, and constitutional analysis from Iraqi experts, *Nada al Sha'b* demonstrated that the Treaty itself as well as the manner in which it had been passed represented a retrogression of Iraqi progress that would never be overcome until British power was no longer a component in Iraqi political life.²³⁹

It was *al Alam al Arabi* that first gave voice to the attitude the press would ultimately take concerning the Treaty in lamenting the “outpouring of abuse and blame which have followed the ratification of the new treaty” and calling for unity of purpose among the papers and the parties whose interests they both influenced and reflected. “The treaty,” the writer argued, “has been ratified... let all efforts now be turned to improving those things which so sadly need improvement and reform.”²⁴⁰ A few days later, *al Alam al Arabi* expanded on its reasoning, stating that “those who have prescribed for us are watching the effects of this medicine. We must therefore make every day an effort to improve so that each year may mark a definite advancement in our administration, our education and in our national wealth so that we may be ready to stand alone at the earliest possible moment.”²⁴¹

That is not to say, however, that the Iraqi nationalist press or political parties had resigned themselves to the fate of becoming a quasi-protectorate of the British Empire. As the concluding chapter of this dissertation discusses, the final contest over control of Iraq's political destiny before the advent of her independence began the moment the 1926 Treaty was ratified and Iraqi nationalism, largely because of the empowerment I have described above, would play a crucial role in shaping it. The independent freedom of

²³⁹ *Nada al Sha'b*, January 21, 1926.

²⁴⁰ *al Alam al Arabi*, January 22, 1926.

²⁴¹ *al Alam al Arabi*, January 30, 1926.

action of the press and the leaders of the political opposition in Iraq expressed in the years leading up to the 1926 Treaty, however, would not be experienced again in Iraq for the duration of the twentieth-century. For as emancipation from the mandate became increasingly inevitable over the second half of the 1920's, Faysal would demand every means of leverage the Iraqi state could bring to bare on the British government to ensure that the final settlement of Anglo-Iraqi relations would be something more than merely the next tier of indirect imperial rule. Although they would remain at the fore of the most aggressive and unified mobilization of the Iraqi public against British control that the Residency had seen since the 1920 rising, Iraqi nationalist leaders would also directly contribute to the undermining of Iraqi democracy and the empowerment of the Sherifian court that would characterize Iraqi political life for the next quarter century.

Chapter 7: Complete Independence?

In his classic work on the Iraqi mandate period, Peter Sluglett has referred the nearly three years between the January 1926 ratification of the second Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and the declaration by the second Labour government of its pending unconditional support for Iraqi membership to the League of Nations in the fall of 1929 as the “Years of Frustration,” and with good reason.¹ With the ratification of the 1926 Treaty, the emancipation of Iraq from the British mandate became a matter of time and both the Baldwin administration and Faysal began laying the groundwork for maintaining their power and influence in a post-mandate Iraq. For the Baldwin administration, it was imperative that the British government lay down in a legal agreement precisely what its responsibilities and privileges would be in a free Iraq, to British advantage, while they were still in a position to determine precisely when Iraqi membership in the League of Nations would take place. For his part, Faysal held no illusions about the dependence of his monarchy and his nation’s bid for independence alike upon British military and political support. Although the Residency’s perception of his cooperation in the negotiations was essential for the maintenance of British support for his monarchy, it was equally essential that he be perceived by the Iraqi people as a champion of ‘complete independence’ from the British and sympathetic to the efforts of Iraq’s growing anti-colonial nationalist movement.

This concluding chapter seeks to offer a more detailed discussion than has yet been undertaken by historians of precisely how Faysal orchestrated a stalemate over a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty between 1926 and 1929, the role played by Iraqi nationalist political parties and the press in Faysal’s bid to obtain the maximum degree of Iraqi

¹ Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), pp. 141-170.

control over its national destiny and the consequences of that role for Iraqi nationalism, and, finally, the role the second MacDonald administration played in overcoming that stalemate and emancipating Iraq from the mandate in 1932.² I argue that while Faysal used the network of political patronage that he, Cox, and Dobbs had constructed through the Sherifian court to keep order and keep treaty negotiations on track, he also depended heavily on the formidable opposition movement generated through the Iraqi press to frustrate those negotiations to his personal advantage.³ As a result, he was able to incur a stalemate with the Baldwin administration as a means of holding out for a more advantageous treaty arrangement ultimately delivered by MacDonald's Labour government in 1929, but only through the appropriation and ultimate delegitimation of the popular nationalist movement in Iraq. Although Faysal's manipulation of the Iraqi political system to his advantage during this period is a theme in most scholarly work on the subject,⁴ this study shifts the crucial role of anti-colonial nationalism in Iraq to center

² Philip Ireland's 1937 work on the mandate period briefly notes the key points of tension between Faysal and the British over the details of the Treaty negotiations and points up the unpopularity of the final draft in Iraq. He does not consider the opposition to the Treaty, beyond Faysal's limited objections, as being of significant influence, however, and merely notes that the advent of a Labour government in 1929 "facilitated a change in British policy" that, though still unpopular generally, faced little opposition in its passage through the Iraqi Parliament. Philip Willard Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London: Kegan Paul, 2004), pp. 409-418; Sluglett's 1976 work on the mandate gives a bit more consideration to the basic tensions between Faysal and the British government as well as a discussion of the views of nationalist political parties, he does not, however, view the opposition as having been unified in any way or very influential on the process apart from offering an occasional scare of popular unrest for the Residency. Sluglett, like Ireland, merely identifies the advent of a Labour government as a transition point for British policy without an analysis of Labour's view of the mandate. See Sluglett, pp. 141-170; Toby Dodge's more recent study of the mandate period does point out that Faysal deliberately "paralyzed" Iraqi politics as a means of pressuring the British into acquiescing to his demands, but offers no consideration of Iraqi politics *per se* or attempts to make an argument for the actual influence of Faysal's efforts on the negotiations. Dodge goes a bit beyond Ireland and Sluglett in recognizing that the "Labour minority government... was not constrained by the imperial ideology of its predecessor," but that comment is the extent of his analysis. See Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003), pp. 34-37.

³ For a brief iteration of the pervasive argument that the Iraqi press under the mandate and, especially after 1926, was primarily a tool of Iraqi politicians, see Amy Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 91-95.

⁴ See footnote 2 above.

stage as a political force for change in and of itself that Faysal merely tried to influence and direct.

This chapter also illustrates how the treaty stalemate gave the second MacDonald administration in 1929 the opportunity to vindicate its legacy as the party for a more democratic approach to imperial and foreign policy by replacing the Baldwin draft of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty with one less offensive to Iraqi nationalist sensibilities and offering to support Iraqi admission to the League in 1932 unconditionally. The fact that it was a Labour government that broke the stalemate and emancipated Iraq has also been acknowledged by most historians interested in the mandate period,⁵ though it has tended to interest historians of Labour history very little.⁶ Here, I argue that the emancipation of Iraq in 1929 was a culminating and vindicating moment for Labour's legacy, beginning with the advent of the ILP in the late 19th century and galvanized through UDC and ILP propaganda during the First World War, as the party for the democratization of the inter-

⁵ Elizabeth Monroe's view of the role of British Labour in Iraq offers a snapshot of a somewhat pervasive tendency among historians who consider Labour's role in Iraq policy at all by viewing the first MacDonald administration's failure to shift the policy of its predecessors, despite MacDonald's personal standing as a "long-standing critic of imperialism," as example of idealist politicians being 'tamed' by the realities of office and of the stability the imperial framework gave to Britain's inter-national relations generally. Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), pp. 74-142. Also, see footnote 2 above

⁶ David Howell's study of the Labour movement specifically over the course of both MacDonald administrations, for example, makes no mention at all of Labour attitudes toward policy in Iraq, see David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Henry Winkler's extensive work on the Labour Party has paid significant attention to foreign policy and Labour's involvement in the League of Nations movement. Nevertheless, even Winkler has tended to leave Iraq out of his narratives. See Henry R. Henry Ralph Winkler, *British Labour Seeks a Foreign Policy, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick, N.J. Transaction Publishers, 2005) and Henry R. Winkler, *Paths Not Taken: British Labour and International Policy in the 1920's* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina, 1994). For works on Labour's related interest in India and Egypt, see the classic work by Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975) and the more recent by Nicholas J. Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). John Callaghan's recent study offers an example of a history of Labour's foreign relations that touches on the mandates briefly only to leave off the story until the Attlee government takes office in 1945, John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007).

imperial system as a whole and beginning with the British Empire. Just as the UDC and ILP's call for the interdiction of territorial transfer at the end of the Great War gave rise to a popular support for British membership and conformity with the principles of a League of Nations, so too would Labour's emancipation of Iraq from British rule and support for its membership to the League become the first steps toward the 'age of decolonization' that would follow the Second World War in which a third and fourth Labour government in the 1940's and 1960's would also play a crucial role.

It was no coincidence that Faysal had selected Abd al Mushin al Sa'dun to be the Prime Minister to midwife the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1926 through the Parliament. Though loyal to the Sherifian court, Sa'dun was also a firm believer in the necessity of a strong relationship between the Palace and the British government for Iraqi stability and progress toward independence, and even after, and had organized and led his 'pro-government' Hisb al Taqaddam, which dominated the Parliament by 1926, accordingly.⁷ With the Treaty ratified and Sa'dun as Prime Minister, Faysal seemed well positioned to shore up the strength of the monarchy as the political center of the soon-to-be independent state of Iraq. His tactic of empowering 'extreme nationalist' elements to bring pressure to bear on the Residency as well as bring the Iraqi public into line with the Palace agenda over the fall of 1925, however, had, perhaps, overly empowered opponents to Sa'dun's program and even rivals for Faysal's position at the center of the Iraqi political landscape.⁸ For although Yasin al Hashimi and his Hisb al Sha'b had not gotten

⁷ Sluglett, p. 85 and Ireland, p. 422 and `Abd al-Razzaq Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah Al-Iraqiyah*, vol. 2 (Sayda: Matba'at al-Irfan, 1971), pp. 5-11 and 31-39.

⁸ This is a view shared by a number of historians of Iraq, including Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2004), pp. 31-34; C. Ernest Dawn, "The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in

the nationwide support they expected in walking out of Parliament over the passage of the Treaty, they had generated enough popular legitimacy as the main opposition party to significantly challenge the Hisb al Taqaddam's legislative agenda in Parliament and the press.⁹

As early as February 1926, the Sa'dun Cabinet determined to silence its foremost critics by shutting down both *al Istiqlal* and *Nada al Sha'b* for their criticisms of his governments subservience to British interests, but on the grounds that "their publications disturbed the security of the country." On Faysal's advice, tellingly protective of Yasin's freedom of political maneuver, that it might be "inadvisable to suspend at one blow all organs hostile to his government," however, it was decided to make an example of the more independent *al Istiqlal* alone, along with the public notification that any personal attacks on members of government were forbidden by pain of legal action.¹⁰ *Nada al Sha'b*, the organ of Yasin's Hisb al Sha'b, was permitted to continue publication and took full advantage of the suppression of *al Istiqlal* as an example of the Hisb al Taqaddam's tendency to suppress, rather than engage, opposition to its agenda. *Nada al Sha'b* characteristically followed the suppression with articles on the importance of a free press as a bridge between the public and the government in democratic nations.¹¹ Experts on constitutionalism wrote in to express their "astonishment" at the suppression, the reasons for which were legally determined to be "entirely inadequate and unjustifiable."¹² *Nada*

the Interwar Years," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 20, No. 1. (February 1988): pp. 67-91; and Sluglett, pp. 141-147;

⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 4, February 18, 1926. (220) and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 31-42 and 48-52.

¹⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 5, March 4, 1926. NA, CO/370105/1 *al Istiqlal* got wind of the suppression plan and was actually able to condemn its own suppression on the day it was to commence, see *al Istiqlal*, February 22, 1926.

¹¹ *Nada al Sha'b* March 9, 1926.

¹² *Nada al Sha'b* March 7, 1926.

al Sha'b compared the pro-British slant of *al Iraq*¹³ and “the English newspaper” the *Baghdad Times*¹⁴ with the patriotic condemnation of the unequal Anglo-Iraqi relationship appearing in the papers Sa'dun chose to shut down to illustrate where his true loyalties lay.¹⁵ As one might expect, *Nida al Sha'b* pointed out, the Sa'dun administration had also failed to push for the reduction of British presence and influence in the administration of Iraq, the promise of which had served as the basis for forming a quorum for the ratification of the Treaty in the first place.¹⁶ As Faysal, Sa'dun, and the Hisb al Taqaddam well knew, *Nida al Sha'b* declared, all that was needed “to bring about the execution of these promises... was a little pressure and a little determination” from the Iraqi people.¹⁷ The question at the heart of the matter, as far as the Iraqi people were concerned, was what the government and the Palace had to gain by choosing to suppress that effort, rather than support it.¹⁸ Considering the vehemence of *Nada al Sha'b's* response to *al Istiqlal's* suppression, an equally important question this chapter seeks to answer is why *Nada al Sha'b* was permitted to pursue the same lines of argument.

In Parliament, regular contributor to the nationalist press Shaikh Ahmad Daud led opposition members' efforts to obstruct practically every act of legislation put forward by the Sa'dun administration.¹⁹ Having gained a majority in a financial oversight committee, Yasin used his position to attack the government for its failure to reduce the number of foreign advisors who, despite the expense of their employment, had failed to

¹³ *Nada al Sha'b* February 25, 1926.

¹⁴ *Nada al Sha'b* April 26, 1926.

¹⁵ *Nada al Sha'b* April, 6, 1926.

¹⁶ *Nada al Sha'b*, March 16.

¹⁷ *Nada al Sha'b* April 1, 1926.

¹⁸ *Nada al Sha'b* April 1 and 26, 1926.

¹⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 7, April 1, 1926. NA, CO/730/105/1 and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 21-23.

prepare Iraqis, let alone the Iraqi state, for self-government.²⁰ By May, Faysal informed Dobbs that the only way the Sa'dun Cabinet would be able to move forward would be to dissolve the Parliament, pass whatever legislation he could by Royal decree, and then arrange "new elections for the purpose of securing a more subservient Assembly."²¹ Although Dobbs stood in the way of Faysal's dissolution of the Parliament, the King's appointment of a coalition government to replace Sa'dun that fall which would include key nationalist opposition leaders suggests that a "more subservient Assembly" may not have been his primary goal for the unrealized move. In any event, however, Dobbs' prevention of Sa'dun's replacement in May was out of concern that such a tactic would delay the ratification of a tripartite treaty between the British, Iraq, and Turkey that would finally and formally settle Anglo-Turkish relations over the Mosul question.²²

Having been in negotiations for months in which Turkish demands for shares, rather than profits, in Iraqi oil development had prevented any agreement from being reached over the Mosul question, circumstances suddenly changed dramatically in early May to the advantage of British delegates. In an urgent telegram to the Foreign Office on May 7, 1926, the British representative in Angora reported that, to his utter shock, the Turkish delegates had caved in of a sudden and agreed to settle for a lump sum payment of £500,000, which the Iraqi government would be expected to pay, and a minimal percentage of oil profits. The opportunity for putting the Anglo-Turkish dispute over Iraq right with the League, as well as vindicating the British government's position that, unlike the unquestionably self-serving motivations of Turkey, Britain's primary concern

²⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 10. May 13, 1926. *NA, CO/730/105/1*.

²¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11 May 27, 1926. *NA, CO/730/105/1*.

²² *Ibid.*

had been the principle of nationality in Iraq all along, was far more than British delegates could ever have hoped for.²³ Accordingly, once the new treaty had been drafted, Dobbs worked tirelessly to bring the Sa'dun government and the opposition together for its ratification.²⁴

In a telling repetition of the passage of the 1926 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, the Hisb al Shab, led by Yasin in Parliament, made every effort to obstruct the Hisb al Taqaddam majority's approval of the Iraqi-Anglo-Turkish settlement and, when those efforts failed, he and his party walked out of Parliament.²⁵ Having fought the opposition's obstructions, Sa'dun and the Hisb al Taqaddam then used the opportunity of their absence from Parliament to pass and ratify the historic agreement on June 14, 1926, with a reasonable majority.²⁶ Special Security Officer for Baghdad Philip Plant, for one, viewed the walk-out with suspicion. As Plant pointed out, although Yasin's dramatic exit from the Parliament bolstered his popularity with 'the anti-British section of the population' and disassociated himself from the passage of the treaty, it, in effect, opened the door for the ratification of the treaty that might not have made it through in a vote with the opposition's moral and physical presence in Parliament.²⁷ The response to the ratification of both the government and the opposition offers some clarity both to the walk-out and to Plant's half-formed suspicions.

Nada al Sha'b came out immediately with the condemnation that the ratification was but "further evidence of the continued policy of [the government's] readiness to

²³ For the full collection of dispatches pertaining to the negotiations and settlement, see NA, FO/371/11458, 11461, 11462, and 11463.

²⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 11 May 27, 1926. NA, CO/730/105/1.

²⁵ For a detailed chronological account of the treaty debates in the Iraqi Cabinet, see Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 58-71.

²⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 13, June 24, 1926. NA, CO/730/105/1.

²⁷ Plant to ASI June 9, 1926. NA, AIR/23/264/32

concede [to the British] when the interests of the country are at stake.” The critique was placed in an historical context, however, of sacrifices already made and deemed by the nationalist press as having been unavoidable ‘ransoms’ paid by the Iraqis for their independence, noting that “we have made sacrifices to the English, the Americans, the French, and the Dutch all in order that our young state might have a good start in life and now we have made our sacrifice to the Turks too.”²⁸ Although the Sa’dun administration was guilty of falling short of the opposition’s commitment to resisting the imposition of the treaty, like other administrations, it had also been faced with the all too familiar *fait accompli* imposed on Iraq as the price of its independence by the British, who were the real enemies of ‘complete independence’ in Iraq.

As for the Sa’dun administration, an interview in *al Iraq* with the chief negotiator for the treaty in Angora, Nuri al Said, pointed out that the government had succeeded in obtaining a treaty in which “Great Britain had not signed... as a mandatory power,” and, therefore, codified in an international agreement that “the mandate was non-existent.” Moreover, the completion of the settlement with Turkey also meant that Iraq was on track for League Membership in 1928, as promised by the Bonar Law administration with the passage of the Protocol, at which time “not one British soldier would remain in the Iraq.”²⁹ In a move designed to preemptively diffuse the argument that foreigners were ‘drinking the blood of Iraq’ that had accompanied the Turkish Petroleum Company concessions in years prior, the Residency accompanied the announcement of the settlement with a congratulatory gift of forgiving Iraq’s debt to the British of some £790,000, an amount that would more than make up for the £500,000 Iraq was meant to

²⁸ *Nada al Sha’b*, June 15, 1926.

²⁹ *al Iraq*, June 14, 1926.

pay the Turkish state for Mosul.³⁰ Although the government may have failed to entirely deflect the latest ransom for Iraqi emancipation, it had not entirely sacrificed Iraqi interests in keeping the state on the path toward independence and the expulsion of the British from the country. In the end, the manner in which the Iraqi-Anglo-Turkish Treaty was ratified succeeded in painting the British as the foremost enemies of Iraqi self-determination while permitting both the government and the opposition to retain their popular legitimacy as divergent, and yet parallel movements for an independent Iraq.

A key point of divergence between the *Hisb al Taqaddam* and the *Hisb al Sha'b* that would emerge from the public debate over the Turkish settlement, however, was the importance of membership to the League of Nations for Iraqi independence. For the government party, the defining end of British control in Iraq had always been League membership. Although the end of British rule was also at the forefront of the opposition's agenda, a new line taken up by the opposition press in the fall of 1926 disparaging not only the relevance of Iraqi membership in the League, but of the League itself, suggests a clear awareness that negotiations for a new treaty to define Anglo-Iraqi relations in the wake of independence was in the offing.

The settlement with Turkey was accompanied by a report from the Residency to the League of Nations, published in London and Iraq that August, which emphasized Iraqi progress in its domestic and foreign relations, as evidenced by the ratification of the two recent treaties, toward League membership. The report's publication inspired, however, the unanticipated eruption of anti-League of Nations sentiment in the opposition press, according to the Residency, in which 'extreme nationalist' writers "sneered" at references to Iraqi progress and "decried" the advantages of League

³⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report no. 14, June 25, 1926. *NA, CO/730/105/1*.

membership all together. Although the Residency anticipated that there would still be “a very strong movement in this country to bring pressure to bear on the British Government to secure [Iraqi] admission” to the League in 1928, it acknowledged that even Iraqi moderates tended to view the termination of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty as “the sweetest fruits of League membership,” which, otherwise, seemed to be losing its appeal.³¹

al Istiqlal, for one, declared that there were no advantages whatsoever to League membership apart from the end of the mandate, an argument that *al Iraq* immediately countered with the example of Germany and Egypt “doing their utmost to gain admission to the League because they know that the League is a body which has a decisive voice in the affairs of the world.” In any event, *al Iraq* declared, “Iraq is fit now to enter the League of Nations” and the only criticism that could be made of the report was the appearance of the word “hope” its projection of Iraqi acceptance to the League in 1928, which the Baldwin administration would soon reject out of hand.³² *Al Alam al Arabi* made the opposite argument, challenged the report’s claims that Iraq was “enjoying a considerable measure of prosperity,” arguing that “the author of the report felt the fear of the truth... and strove to minimize the shock” of the reality of “present deplorable financial situation” Iraqis were actually facing. Considering the number of well-paid British advisors and their failure to set Iraqis or their state on the road to prosperity and

³¹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 18, August 20, 1926. NA, R/20/A/1238 The opinions of Iraqis concerning the League of Nations, beyond their desire to signify independence through League Membership, are almost never considered by historians of Iraq. For a discussion of the lack of attention to non-imperial perspectives on the League, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³² *al Iraq* August 20, 1926.

progress, *al Alam al Arabi* concluded, it was the British themselves who were responsible for the economic straits Iraq was in.³³

Nada al Sha'b similarly argued that Iraqi progress should be measured in the ability of Iraqi 'public men' to wring any sort of liberty at all out of their foreign occupiers. "How much justice it would have been," the writer stated, if the report had more accurately illustrated "that Iraqis had been able by their patience to obtain some fruits from a constitution which does not ensure their principle hopes nor the fundamental principles embodied in the constitutions of other countries." "Where are the fruits of this constitution," the writer wryly asked, "in the freedom of the press, perhaps it lies in the constant neglect of the resolutions of Parliament, or the ill temper with which the expressed wishes of the people are so constantly received."³⁴ As for membership in the League, *Nada al Sha'b* stated, "everyone knows what the free Iraqis think about the League of Nations."³⁵ They did "not set much store by entering the League of Nations... [for] entry into the League does not mean freedom or independence." The League was stocked with "many countries subject to the protection or colonization of others... India and Australia and Canada and Ireland and South Africa" while other countries "quite independent and free like America and Germany and Russia and Turkey lose nothing by not being members of the League." As the experiences of Arab peoples under League protection had shown, "the League is still subject to the influences of the Colonizing Powers who created it and its mandates to satisfy their lusts and greed." The notion that membership would bring an end to the illegitimate Anglo-Iraqi treaty relations was little more than a dream, as the recent Treaty had demonstrated. The only attraction for

³³ *al Alam al Arabi* August 17, 1926.

³⁴ *Nada al Sha'b*, August 15, 1926.

³⁵ *Nada al Sha'b*, August 15, 1926.

League membership, in the view of *Nada al Sha'b* was the modicum of leverage Iraqis could gain from it to force some kind of revision in its relations with Britain and “recover some of our lost rights” as a mandate.³⁶

Such sentiments were confirmed and even enflamed that September, when British delegate to the League of Nations Sir Austen Chamberlain protested against the ‘inquisitorial nature’ of the Permanent Mandates Commission’s assumption of the right to make inquiries into the management of the mandates.³⁷ How, asked *al Istiqlal*, could Chamberlain reconcile Britain’s famous “love of democracy and constitutionalism” with his opposition to the “examination of Mandatory Powers in regard to their administrations... and for hearing of the complaints of the mandated peoples?” Chamberlain would do well to remember, *al Istiqlal* advised, that although there were those Iraqis content seeing their nation “bound with the golden chain of the mandate,” there were also “the true sons of Iraq who watch closely every movement which they think may be detrimental to its national existence,” offering French occupied Syria as example of what a free hand would bring.³⁸ *Nada al Sha'b* responded to Chamberlain’s interferences with a tirade against the League of Nations. For the League had “undermined the foundations of high principles on which it was established and done much to impair its reputation” by way of its “attitude... in regard to the Arab countries.” All “oriental peoples,” as a result, were “disposed therefore to see in it a tool in the hands of the greater nations used at their will to gain their own political ends.” Thus, the paper

³⁶ *Nada al Sha'b*, August 16, 1926.

³⁷ For a discussion of the Permanent Mandates Committee, see H. R. G. Greaves, *The League Committees and World Order; a Study of the Permanent Expert Committees of the League of Nations as an Instrument of International Government* (London, Oxford University Press: H. Milford, 1931), pp. 169-199,

³⁸ *al Istiqlal*, September 8, 1926.

did not see “any great benefit for Iraq to be gained from joining the League, except the termination of the... Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and escape from its unsatisfactory conditions.”³⁹

Over the fall of 1926, the Residency observed with foreboding as Yasin’s Hisb al Sha’b seemed to gain more and more ground over Sa’dun’s Hisb al Taqaddam. As *Nada al Sha’b* accurately pointed out in November, a number of Hisb al Taqaddam supporters in the Chamber had “changed sides disgusted with [its] conduct” and begun to threaten its grip on the government.⁴⁰ In what seemed to have been a plan to force a declaration of confidence in the Hisb al Taqaddam in the face of the opposition, Sa’dun called for the election of a new Parliamentary President in November in which his candidate was turned out by the lawyer and outspoken enemy of British influence in Iraqi government, but, tellingly, a loyal supporter of Faysal’s throne, Rashid Ali al Gaylani.⁴¹ The new president announced in his acceptance speech that his election “must be regarded as a defeat for the government” that had failed to enforce the transition from British advisors to Iraqi statesmen at the helm of the Iraqi government under Sa’dun.⁴² *Nada al Sha’b* concurred, openly rejoicing the victory as showing “the true extent of the Chambers’ confidence in the Saduniyah Government” and even the somewhat more moderate, in the view of the Residency, *al Alam al Arabi* called the election of Rashid Ali “tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the government.”⁴³ When Rashid Ali’s election led directly to the Sa’dun Cabinet’s resignation and Faysal’s appointment of former Prime Minister Ja’far al Askari,⁴⁴ *Nada al Sha’b* enjoined the Hisb al Taqaddam to “emulate the

³⁹ *Nada al Sha’b*, October 21, 1926.

⁴⁰ *Nada al Sha’b*, September 22, 1926.

⁴¹ Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, p. 79.

⁴² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 23, November 9, 1926. NA, CO/730/107/68

⁴³ *al Alam al Arabi* November 5, 1926.

⁴⁴ Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, p. 79-81.

opposition by allowing the new Cabinet an opportunity to prove its worth or otherwise in a calm atmosphere.” Taking the opportunity to point up the outgoing Cabinet’s shortcomings and the role of the opposition in ousting it, the writer stated that,

If after such an opportunity the new Cabinet proves to have violated constitutional rights, failed to give effect to the resolutions of the Chamber of Deputies, made light of public interests, sprung [legislation] upon the Chamber...and exposed the Capital to inundations... the Opposition will not fail to find some means to turn the new Government down.⁴⁵

The selection by Faysal of al Askari, a Sherifian loyalist and close friend of the King also well liked and respected among members of the Hisb al Taqaddam and the opposition parties alike, made sense to the Residency. Suspicions were raised, however, by Faysal’s decision to ask al Askari to form a coalition government that would include Nuri al Said, perhaps the most politically powerful member of the Sherifian court, Yasin al Hashimi, the clear forerunner for leadership of the popular opposition movement, and Parliamentary President Rashid Ali.⁴⁶ With five months of the al Askari coalition behind them and the negotiations for the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty underway by the summer of 1927, Dobbs and his Councillor and Acting High Commissioner during periods of absence B. H. Bourdillon would reflect back on the formation of the al Askari coalition as the opening move in a grand plan devised by Faysal to pressure the British government into giving him the kind of treaty he desired by generating as much anti-British opposition in Iraq as his monarchy could withstand.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Nada al Sha’b*, November 10, 1926.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the formation of the al Askari coalition, see Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, p. 80-81.

⁴⁷ B. H. Bourdillon’s candid discussion of Faysal’s attempts to manipulate the political landscape of Iraq as a negotiating tool against British designs for the Treaty can be found in his dispatches to the Foreign Office in NA, FO/371/12259. The accusation that Faysal had deliberately fueled the fire of anti-British sentiment in Iraq and even politically empowered known ‘extremist nationalists’ to the point of endangering his own monarchy was presented to Faysal during the negotiations in the fall of 1927, the minutes of which are in

The advantages for Faysal of a national movement opposed to the successful completion of treaty negotiations he himself was undertaking was several-fold, according to Dobbs and Bourdillon. Faysal held no illusions about the dependence of his authority in Iraq on British power, a fact illustrated by his fruitless pleading with Dobbs for British military support for imposing national conscription in Iraq which, for reasons of politics, principle, and security, Dobbs refused to provide.⁴⁸ By replacing some of the “best and most efficient civil officials in Iraq” with known “extremists and anti-British adherents of the Royal House” in key locations around Iraq during the treaty negotiations in 1925, according to Dobbs, Faysal hoped to give Iraqis the impression that the opposition was on the rise and that the end of British occupation in 1928 they demanded would require the Iraqi people to protect themselves in their absence, connecting nationalist sentiment with the idea of conscription.⁴⁹ Although remaining ostensibly in support of Sa’dun’s efforts to reach a settlement, according to Bourdillon, Faysal had at his disposal a coterie of “well trained orchestra of ministers and newspapers which... at a sign from the baton of the royal conductor, change their tune with a dexterity reminiscent of a band switching suddenly from ‘Three Blind Mice’ into ‘The Sewanee River’.” Having failed to achieve his ends completely in 1925, Faysal was upping the stakes for the pending negotiations of a new treaty from the fall of 1926 and into the summer of 1927, Bourdillon believed, by empowering the opposition and fomenting a popular hatred of the British and a sense of patriotic Iraqi identity grounded in pushing them out of the country.⁵⁰

NA, CO/730/120/40299. For an historical discussion of conscription in Anglo-Iraqi relations, see Sluglett, pp. 142-147 and Ireland, pp. 392-393.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of conscription as a political issue, see Sluglett, pp. 142-147 and Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 115-117.

⁴⁹ Dobbs, “Note on the Internal Situation in Iraq,” June 27, 1927. NA, FO/371/12259/150.

⁵⁰ Bourdillon to Shuckburgh, July 28, 1927. NA, FO/371/12259/212.

The political framework reflected in the al Askari coalition represented what Phebe Marr has called a “tripartite balance of power” in Iraqi politics that “persisted right up to the revolution of 1958” comprising the throne, with its ambivalent relationship with both the British and Iraqi nationalism, the Prime Minister representing a bridge between the throne and the people while sharing its identification with British patronage, and a “shifting group” of politicians of an oppositionist and anti-colonialist bent, but nevertheless willing to take office to achieve their ends.⁵¹ The al Askari coalition also perfectly reflected the façade of an empowered Iraqi nationalist movement desired by Faysal, a fact not lost on Bourdillon. Ja’far al Askari and Nuri al Said were both key figures in the Hisb al Taqaddam and Sherifian loyalists who shared Faysal’s “wildest dreams of Arab Imperialism, the former ready to produce the most fantastic schemes of military domination” but also his recognition of the importance of the Anglo-Sherifian relationship after independence. Rashid Ali could wield considerable “influence with the young lawyer class” but also evinced a clear “subservience to the King.” Yasin Pasha was, perhaps the riskiest of the alliances, for, although he held the broadest influence among the anti-British element in Iraq, he was also known to be “loyal to himself alone... [and] content to work slowly for his own ends.” Yasin was considered to be “the ablest and most forceful politician in the country,” which made him especially dangerous to Faysal in “conceiving himself as the future Zaghlul of Iraq.” Bourdillon had little doubt that Yasin, for one, was merely using the opportunity to gain a footing for his own political advancement “and is using the King as a stepping stone.”⁵²

⁵¹ Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2004), p. 33. Also see Phebe Marr, “The Development of a Nationalist Ideology in Iraq, 1920-1941,” *Muslim World* 75, no. 2 (1985): 85-101

⁵² Bourdillon to Shuckburgh, July 28, 1927. NA, FO/371/12259/211

With opposition leaders in the government and nationalist agitation heating up all over the country, Faysal, Dobbs and Bourdillon presumed, believed he could bring pressure to bear on the Baldwin administration to concede on key issues in the treaty negotiations, including supporting Iraq's membership to the League in 1928 and possibly the support of the RAF for conscription, to ensure the Treaty's acceptance by the Chamber and to prevent a general rising. If Faysal could return to Iraq with such a treaty in hand and have the al Askari coalition approve it, in one fell swoop he would have succeeded in securing Iraq's 'complete independence', raised a fervor of patriotic support for himself and his government sufficient to implement a policy of national conscription, and, thus, procured for himself a government free from foreign control and an army strong enough to maintain his increasingly authoritarian tendencies as monarch.⁵³

In early June, in the wake of a spate of newspaper articles speculating on the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, al Askari requested that Acting High Commissioner Bourdillon make a statement in the press addressing which aspects of the existing the British government were prepared to negotiate and which they were not. When Bourdillon, believing he was being manipulated, refused even to acknowledge that negotiations were immanent, a telegram from the Iraqi representative in London, Muzahim al Pachachi, was 'leaked' to *al Iraq* suggesting that negotiations were about to begin and that Faysal would soon be en route to Europe to undertake them. The publication of the 'Pachachi telegram' sparked a "tide of journalistic speculation" about the negotiations, but also opinions as to what the desiderata of the Iraqi government should be, especially in relation to the "necessity for reducing the powers of the High Commissioner and of British Advisers" that, Bourdillon noted, was but the first salvo of "a violent press campaign, on considerably anti-British

⁵³ Dobbs, "Note on the Internal Situation in Iraq," June 27, 1927. NA, FO/371/12259/158 and 162.

lines.” Bourdillon had no doubt that the inspiration for the campaign, in which *al Istiqlal* and *Nada al Sha'b* took the lead, and the wild speculations about the negotiations it sought to popularize emanated directly from the Palace and, accordingly, he refused even to acknowledge their demands for a clarifying statement.⁵⁴

Faysal's hold over the nationalist opposition was not as complete as Bourdillon let on, however, and almost immediately after the assembly of the al Askari coalition, some of the most outspoken members of the Hisb al Sha'b, the most notable being Shaikh Ahmad Daud, opted to defect from the party.⁵⁵ With the lawyer nationalist and fellow independent Muzahim al Pachachi, Shaikh Daud had been an important voice in the early 'lawyers' group' with its focus on constitutional principles in relation to the instruments of government British advisors were attempting to pass through the government. It was in that spirit that Daud and Pachachi challenged nearly every piece of legislation the incoming al Askari Cabinet attempted to pass. As Pachachi, having returned from London and resumed his place in Parliament, pointed out to the Parliament, it was not the legislation to which they objected, but the manner in which it was being handled. Like the Sa'dun administration, the al Askari administration tended to "abuse its constitutional

⁵⁴ Bourdillon to Amery July 29, 1927. NA, CO/730/120/40518/4. For examples of such publications, see *al Istiqlal*, July 27 and 28 and *al Iraq* July 28, 1927. NA, CO/730/120/40518/4

⁵⁵ It was during this period that the most significant Iraqi nationalist movements of the 1930's to the 1950's began to take more organized form, presumably in the face of the appropriation of the movement by the likes of Yasin al Hashimi. For a succinct discussion of the emergence of the Iraqi nationalist club *al Ahali*, see Mudhafar Amin and Edmund Ghareeb, "The Intellectual Origins and Ideas of the Ahali Group," in Mudhafar Amin and Edmund Ghareeb, *Law Personalities, and, Politics of the Middle East: Essays in Honor of Majid Khadduri*, ed. James Piscatori and George S. Harris (Washington: Westview Press, 1987). For a more extensive discussion of the history of underground 'revolutionary movements' in Iraq focusing on the origins of the Iraqi Communist Party, see the classic work by Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'Thists, and Free Officers*, Princeton Studies on the Near East (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1978), especially pp. 367-434. For a discussion of the administrative tensions among the opposition elements in relation to Faysal during this period, see Ahmad Khalif `Afif, *Al-Tatawwur Al-Idari Lil-Dawlah Al-'Iraqiyah Fi `ahd Al-Intidab Al-Baritani, 1922-1932*, (Amman: Dar Jarir, 2008), pp. 93-110.

powers.” It was not the increase in the Public Works Department that was at issue, for example, but the designation of the increase as an urgent expenditure to streamline the legislative process over the recess. Similarly, it was not the granting of a loan to the Railway Department, but the fact that the railway itself had not technically become the property of the Iraqi state, and therefore remained a troubling matter of foreign, and not merely domestic, relations that demanded the attention, and not the political maneuver, of the government.⁵⁶

By May 1927, SSO Plant reported, Shaikh Daud had drawn a sufficient number of supporters from the primarily urban ‘lawyers group,’ the Shi’a *ulema*, and some influential tribal leaders away from Yasin’s Hisb al Sha’b and even begun holding secret meetings with the aim of unifying their efforts to disrupt the government across lines of sect and class.⁵⁷ Using the traditional hostility to conscription of both the Shi’a and the tribes under the Ottomans as a rallying point, demonstrations were organized in Baghdad early May in which speeches, attended by thousands, called for the unification of all Arabs irrespective of their religion or nation and, indeed all subjugated peoples,⁵⁸ “to free themselves from the yoke of colonizers and mandatory powers.”⁵⁹ By mid-May, Daud and his Shi’a supporters had begun holding formal meetings promoting a trans-sectarian opposition under the name Hisb al Ittihad⁶⁰ that immediately began to draw members of the predominantly Shi’a Hisb al Nahdhah accelerated by party leader Rashid Ali’s

⁵⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 1, January 6, 1927. *NA, CO/730/12264*

⁵⁷ Plant to ASI, May 2, 1927. *NA, AIR/23/266*.

⁵⁸ According to Plant, speakers drew attention to the struggles in China as an example of the global struggle “for freedom of thought” and there was “a great deal of Long live China, long live Iraq and long live independence in the speeches.” Plant to ASI, May 7, 1927. *NA, AIR/23/266*.

⁵⁹ Plant to ASI, May 7, 1927. *NA, AIR/23/266*.

⁶⁰ Plant to ASI, May 10, 1927. *NA, AIR/23/266*.

reluctance to come out against conscription.⁶¹ Faysal and Yasin's attempts to draw Shaikh Daud back into the Hisb al Sha'b⁶² and his Shi'a collaborators into the government with promises of position and permission to publish a Shi'a political interest newspaper, *al Nahdhah*, had little impact.⁶³ When the annual Shi'a pilgrimage to Karbala got underway that August, SSO for the region Robert Foster reported an uncharacteristic "unity of ideas expressed by both tribal and religious heads" in which "strong anti-government feeling" and a "universal disapproval of the monarchy" seemed to prevail everywhere in the ubiquitous call for an immediate "change in government."⁶⁴

For Dobbs and Bourdillon alike, the success in using conscription to bring tribal leaders and the Shi'a *ulema* together by "Sunni extremists" like Shaikh Daud and urban nationalists of Shi'a decent like President of the Hisb al Nahdhah Amin al Charchafchi was extremely dangerous and the clearest example that Faysal's political manipulation of the 'extreme nationalist' movement was backfiring.⁶⁵ Although "His Majesty's personal influence in the government... has increased considerably since the [Askari Coalition Government] came into being," Bourdillon reported, "his personal popularity has decreased pro rata" as his seizure of "extra-constitutional powers" to appoint ideologues led to the overall deterioration of his regimes efficiency along with its legitimacy.⁶⁶

Although the al Askari coalition attempted to silence their critics, their efforts only galvanized the new opposition. The arrest of Shaikh Daud's son, the lawyer and

⁶¹ Plant to ASI, May 16, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁶² Foster to AIS, July 22, 1927. NA, CO/AIR/23/266.

⁶³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17, August 16, 1927. For a brief history of *al Nahdhah*, see Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, 107-109

⁶⁴ Foster to ASI, August 22 and 29, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁶⁵ Dobbs, "Note on the Internal Situation in Iraq," June 27, 1927. NA, FO/371/12259/158. It is interesting to note that, despite Faysal's ambivalent relationship with both British power and Iraqi nationalism, his popularity or lack thereof in Iraq is almost never considered by historians of Iraq.

⁶⁶ Bourdillon to Shuchburg, August 5, 1927. NA, FO/371/12259/223.

nationalist writer Salman Shaikh Daud, for seditious articles in *al Nahdah* only drew the increased interest of the public, “affording the opposition an excellent opportunity for anti-government propaganda.”⁶⁷ When Salman al Daud was sentenced to a month’s imprisonment and a fine, Charchafchi and the Hisb al Nahdhah defied the demand of both the Palace and the Cabinet to desist in its attacks on the government and even arranged for the Hisb to pay Salman al Daud’s fines and legal expenses.⁶⁸ The Residency would later report that, although Salman al Daud lost his initial trial, “the prestige of the Government was considerably damaged.”⁶⁹ When Yasin Pasha himself informed the court that the government did not wish to pursue its case upon Salman al Daud’s appeal, the Residency reported in October, the Iraqi public drew “the obvious conclusion” that Yasin Pasha, the main target of Daud’s articles, feared being himself put into the dock.⁷⁰ On September 9, Yasin Pasha sent for “the heads of all newspapers” and publicly admonished the editors of *al Nahdhah*, and warned them that he would close any paper which continued to publish anti-government articles.⁷¹ In spite of Yasin Pasha’s warning, however, *al Nahdhah* immediately published a slew of anti-government articles and Salman al Daud publicly expressed his intention to continue his virulent criticisms of the Cabinet in the paper.⁷²

At this precise moment, a dispute arose between Abdul Wahid, a wealthy tribal landowner of the Fatlah region, and the Mutasserrif of Diwaniyah over tax issues.⁷³

⁶⁷ Foster to ASI, September 05, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁶⁸ Foster to ASI, September 6, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁶⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 20, September 29, 1927. NA, FO/371/12265

⁷⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 21, October 11, 1927. NA, FO/371/12265

⁷¹ Foster to ASI, September 7, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁷² Foster to ASI, September 9, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁷³ Dodge has provided a land and tax issues as a socio-political category in which the relationship between the Palace and the Residency played a clear role, see Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003), pp. 101-131.

When Yasin Pasha failed to support Abdul Wahid's position, Abdul Wahid filed for an appeal, but also threatened to "have the whole case published, accompanied by strong criticism, in *al Nahdhah*." He also asserted that, from then on, he would give his full support to Hisb al Nahdhah's anti-government campaign.⁷⁴ Foster reported shortly thereafter that powerful supporters of Abdul Wahid had begun to turn up in Baghdad and similarly threatened to align themselves as well with the increasingly popular Shi'a anti-government movement.⁷⁵ Within days, Abdul Wahid had formally joined Hisb al Nahdhah, published the threatened article in *al Nahdah*, and gone so far as to suggest that the tribes of southern Iraq had reached their breaking point suffering under the oppression of the Government.⁷⁶ When Abdul Wahid initiated his appeal that October, Foster reported, he did so having been offered the representation by Daud al Sadi, a prominent Baghdadi lawyer, opposition activist, and former editor of the suppressed *al Dajlah*.⁷⁷ Within a few days of the appeal, Yasin Pasha relented and gave his full written support to Abdul Wahid in asking for the original ruling to be overturned by the court.⁷⁸

Yasin's willingness to back down in the face of the opposition Faysal and the al Askari coalition had, in fact, generated was pushed to the limit in mid-October when word reached him that British negotiators for the new treaty had come to believe that most Iraqis were not only "indifferent" to the Treaty revisions Faysal was so determinedly fighting for, but "thoroughly disgusted with the present Government."⁷⁹ In the role of Acting Prime Minister in al Askari's absence, Yasin Pasha immediately

⁷⁴ Foster to ASI, September 13, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁷⁵ Foster to ASI, September 15, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁷⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 20, September 29, 1927. NA, FO/371/12265

⁷⁷ Foster to ASI, October 19, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁷⁸ Foster to ASI, October 19, 1927. NA, AIR/23/266.

⁷⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 22, October 27, 1927. NA, FO/371/12265

suspended *al Nahdhah* with no reference to the King or High Commissioner on the grounds that “it had ascribed to the Government acts that have no foundation of truth and has carried out harmful propaganda tending to cause dissension detrimental to endanger the public safety.”⁸⁰ The *Hisb al Nahdhah* responded with petitions and letters protesting the unconstitutionality of the decision to the Residency, the Cabinet, the local press and tribal and religious leaders throughout southern Iraq.⁸¹ The volatility of the situation motivated Dobbs to demand that Yasin, once again, back down and permit *al Nahdhah* to resume publication on the condition that no more seditious articles would be published, which he did but resigned his position as Acting Prime Minister in disgust as a result.⁸² In spite of Yasin’s acquiescence, however, Shaikh Daud merely transferred the staff of *al Nahdhah* to the revived *al Dijlah*⁸³ when Charchafchi refused to sign the agreement to desist in activities he viewed as not only legal, but a patriotic duty.⁸⁴

When Faysal finally returned to Iraq, after over four months abroad in negotiations, in December 1927 with a Treaty sanctioning another twenty-five years of British influence in Iraqi government, particularly in financial and military matters,⁸⁵ most Iraqis, according to Foster’s report, expressed an “apathetic dissatisfaction”, having already come to believe that, no matter what concessions had been made on paper, no real change would have taken place in actual fact. Supporters of Faysal and the Treaty expressed their disappointment at the failure to get the ‘new Treaty’ they wanted, but

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Foster to ASI, October 29, 1927. *NA, AIR/23/266*.

⁸³ Foster to ASI, October 25, 1927. *NA, AIR/23/266*.

⁸⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 24, November 23, 1927, *NA, FO/371/12265*

⁸⁵ For a discussion of the negotiations, see Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 124-133.

their confidence that negotiations in the immediate future would see adjustments in their favor. Kurds and tribal shaikhs tended to see the Treaty as marking no change in Anglo-Iraqi relations, but that any lessening of British control would mean either the unwanted empowerment of the Sherifian officers or the collapse of law and order generally. Older educated Sunnis of a moderate bent tended to realize the dependence of Iraq on the British for a decade at least and to view the concessions the British did make as much as they could have hoped to gain. More nationalist minded lawyers, schoolteachers, educated youth, and educated Shi'as tended to view the negotiations as mishandled by the Iraqi government and Faysal, who they blamed for the failure to make any significant gains.⁸⁶

When Faysal asked the al Askari Cabinet to sign the Treaty he had negotiated, Yasin and Rashid Ali tended to their nationalist credibility by making a show of threatening to resign from the Cabinet rather than put their names to the document. Within a few days, however, all four members of the al Askari coalition had given their signatures and turned to the next phase of 'negotiations' in which Yasin, Rashid Ali, and Nuri would begin mobilizing the Iraqi people in opposition to ratifying the Treaty they had just signed as a means of forcing the British to make further concessions in the face of national opprobrium.⁸⁷ The unfortunate role of supporting the ratification of the Treaty in the Parliament fell, once again, to Sa'dun and the Hisb al Taqaddam.⁸⁸ Using *al Istiqlal* as their organ and, with elections for a new Parliament underway, Yasin, Rashid Ali, and, to a lesser extent, Nuri immediately set out to brutalize the Sa'dun government

⁸⁶ Foster to ASI, December 24 and 27, 1927. *NA*, AIR/23/267.

⁸⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 26, December 07, 1927. *NA*, CO/730/105/12265 and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 130-142.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 144-151.

in the press, arguing that Ja'far al Askari had been prevented from carrying out his "patriotic programme" by the British, that Sa'dun had replaced him because of his willingness to "compromise with the Residency and to sacrifice Iraq's national interests," and that a blow to Sa'dun was a blow to the British occupation.⁸⁹ According to Foster, Yasin also turned his attention to uniting the opposition that his personal role in the al Askari coalition had done so much to fracture behind a new party under his leadership, the Hisb al Ikha al Watani.⁹⁰ Within weeks, Yasin had succeeded in drawing in key figures from the 'lawyer's group' in the Hisb al Sha'b, the remains of the collapsing Hisb al Nahadha including Amin Charchafchi, and the Shi'a nationalist Ja'far abu Timmen.⁹¹

Publicly maintaining his support of the Sa'dun Cabinet's candidates for the Parliament and a free election, Faysal secretly, according to the Residency, "strained every nerve... to influence the elections in favour of the opposition candidates... to prove that His Britannic Majesty's Government and the High Commissioner were wrong [in assuming] that the mass of the people were believed not to be in favour of a radical change in the relations of Great Britain and Iraq" and that the drive for complete and immediate independence was "artificial and inspired merely by an extremist clique."⁹² Across the spectrum of the Iraqi press, accusations were made that the government and the opposition alike were unduly influencing the election for a new Parliament underway with the new Cabinet.⁹³ By the end of April, the Residency was reporting brawls at most polling centers in Baghdad, some of which ended in deaths, though the many complaints of intimidation, in the end, went largely unexamined.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 3, February 1, 1928. NA, FO/371/13027

⁹⁰ Foster to ASI, February 27, 1928. NA, AIR/23/267/60a. Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, pp. 112-119.

⁹¹ Foster to ASI, February 27, 1928. NA, AIR/23/267/61a Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, pp. 108-109.

⁹² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 8 April 11, 1928. NA, FO/371/13027

⁹³ Foster to ASI March 6 and 28, 1928. NA, AIR/23/267.

⁹⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 9, April 25, 1928. NA, FO/371/13027

When the Hisb al Taqaddam and Sa'dun Cabinet achieved a majority in the Parliament at the end of the elections in May,⁹⁵ Rashid Ali and Yasin Pasha used the troubles at the polls and widespread suspicion of interference with the elections to their advantage by challenging the constitutionality of the elections, and Sa'dun's victory, in the Parliament. Rashid Ali openly accused the Sa'dun administration of ordering officials to interfere in the elections "contrary to the spirit of the Electoral Law" and making a "mockery of the so-called reference to the people."⁹⁶ As Treaty negotiations went on between the Residency and the Sa'dun administration over the fall of 1928, Yasin and his collaborators toured the country in their attempt to unify the opposition and expand its reach into new areas.⁹⁷ Ja'far Abu Timmun's revival of the 1920's party Hisb al Watani was especially threatening to the Residency in its appeal to the Iraqi working classes to form trade unions⁹⁸ and to the urban elite to form intellectual societies and professional guilds, such as a Lawyers Society, alike.⁹⁹ Moreover, the Residency observed that October, it was known that Timmun intended to run the Hisb's political campaign around the total rejection of the Treaty complete with regular public demonstrations to bring pressure on the Cabinet to refuse to ratify it.¹⁰⁰

The Treaty negotiations were, at this point, taking place primarily between Sa'dun and Dobbs personally, though both were strictly limited in the compromises they could

⁹⁵ See Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 10 May 9, 1928 and No. 11 May 23, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13027* and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 164-169.

⁹⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12, June 6, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13027* In the confusion of these accusations, one unfortunate and bewildered member of the opposition, the representative for Kut Ata Effendi al Khatib, implicated himself as an example of government interference to put opposition members in office, for which he was summarily expelled from the Parliament by the Sa'dun government only to be returned when Faysal deemed the expulsion unconstitutional and reversed it. Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 12, June 6, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13027*

⁹⁷ Dobs to Amery, May 5, 1928. *NA, CO/730/134/58400/238*.

⁹⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report no. 21, October 10, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13027* and Butti, *Al-Sihafah*, pp. 109-112.

⁹⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report no. 22, October 24, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13027*

¹⁰⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 23, November 7, 1928 and Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 26, December 19, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13027*

make by Faysal and the Baldwin administration respectively. Sa'dun's demands, as he put them to Dobbs in the final stages of negotiations on the verge of collapsing in December 1918, pertained primarily to matters of the military and finance. Rather than be made to wait for membership to the League, Sa'dun demanded that the Iraqi government take full responsibility for such military matters immediately in order to prepare themselves for independence. As part of that responsibility, Sa'dun insisted that, regardless of the nationality of its operatives, all military forces operating under the auspices of the Iraqi government should be under the command of Iraqi, and not British, officers. Concerning matters of finance, Sa'dun insisted that the British take responsibility for the entire cost of the Residency and its entire staff and that various disagreements over customs and railway costs be settled in Iraq's favor. In any event, all agreements made in such matters would be terminated or at least subject to reconsideration by the Iraqi government no later than 1932, at which point the terms would be set by the Iraqi, and not the British government.¹⁰¹

In his reply to Sa'dun, Dobbs reminded him that it must have been as apparent to all Iraqis as it was to himself and the British government that "without the support of the British Forces... the Iraqi Army... would be powerless to protect Iraq from external aggression or to resist the forces of internal disintegration." The "final responsibility" for Iraqi security, therefore, ultimately fell upon British forces and, therefore, the "ultimate control" of defense forces in Iraq, "whether Iraqi or British must remain in British hands." Moreover, because of British responsibilities within Iraq and on her behalf at the international level, it was for the British, and not the Iraqi government, "to decide when the time has come to relax this control, and the degree of relaxation which may then be practicable." In the meantime, Dobbs argued, he and his officers were more than willing to work in the background to help Iraq get on her feet, but not to formally tie their own hands. In the case of the stagnation of negotiations, Dobbs informed Sa'dun that the

¹⁰¹ Abdul Mushin al Sa'dun to Dobbs December 27, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13757/545/161*

British would simply revert to the previous treaty of 1926 for the duration of their obligation as mandatory power.¹⁰²

On January 19, 1929 Sa'dun held a meeting with opposition leaders Yasin Pasha, Ja'far abu Timmun, and Rashid Ali to inform them that the Cabinet had failed to reach an acceptable agreement with the Baldwin administration over military and financial matters and that they intended to resign, a decision which the opposition applauded.¹⁰³ Faysal's expectation that the collapse of the Cabinet would induce the Baldwin administration to rethink their intransigence was mistaken, however, and he found Dobbs "unperturbed" by the situation and confident that no further concessions would be forth coming from London. Dobbs telegrammed the Colonial Secretary that day to inform him of the decision and warn him that, "in their present mood," neither supporters of Sa'dun and the Hisb al Taqaddam, nor the opposition, nor any member of Parliament would be willing to take office, noting that Yasin and the opposition informed Sa'dun upon being told of his resignation, that "if [Great Britain] wished to impose her will she must take over the whole administration."¹⁰⁴ On the anniversary of Sherif Husayn's declaration of war on the Turkish the next day, Timmun declared the holiday a day of mourning for Iraqis, owing to "Great Britain having broken her promises, the blood of the Arabs who had fought for freedom had been shed in vain."¹⁰⁵ The Iraqi government would remain without a Prime Minister or any legislative activity for nearly four months.¹⁰⁶

By the end of April 1929, Faysal seemed to be giving in. He informed Dobbs' replacement as High Commissioner Gilbert Clayton of his intention to ask former dean of the Baghdad Law College, delegate for Iraq at the Arab Conference in 1913 and at Lausanne in 1922, and legal advisor to Faysal on foreign relations Tawfiq al Suwaidi to form a government on the basis of the 1926 Treaty for the purpose of reviving day to day

¹⁰² Dobbs to Sa'dun, December 29, 1928. *NA, FO/371/13757/545/173*

¹⁰³ Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 198-212.

¹⁰⁴ Dobbs to SofSforC January 20, 1929. *NA, FO/371/13757E368/124*.

¹⁰⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 3, January 30, 1929. *NA, FO/371/13760*

¹⁰⁶ Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 212-214.

government in Iraq.¹⁰⁷ In al Suwaidi's inaugural speech to the Cabinet on April 28, he seemed to vindicate the patriotism of both the Sa'dun government and the opposition, suggesting that the British had been forced to face the complete collapse of Iraqi administration short of their acquiescence. Iraq as well, however, had also been made to face the consequences of this state of affairs and found them unacceptable. The King and the Hisb al Taqaddam, he declared, had come to see that the resumption of government legislation was detrimental to Iraq and had decided on a program "of practical and productive policies" oriented toward building Iraq's political, economic, and intellectual strength for the coming end of the mandate.¹⁰⁸ Yasin Pasha, Rashid Ali, and Timmun condemned the decision in the press, arguing that it constituted a retrogression back to 1922 and, significantly, that it made all the Sa'dun administration had struggled for in vain. Nevertheless, the opposition took only 16 out of 56 votes in a vote of no confidence for the Suwaidi administration and the progress of Iraqi government commenced.¹⁰⁹

By mid-July, however, the Residency reported a clear shift in Faysal's attitude toward the Suwaidi Cabinet reflecting "his desire for a more strongly nationalist Cabinet" once again. In explaining this transition, the Residency reported that the former Iraqi Diplomatic Representative in London, Muzahim Pachachi, had been contributing regular articles on the coming general elections in England, complete with "well informed articles on Labour policy." As a result, Faysal had been "undoubtedly encouraged" to resume his pressure tactics on the British "by the idea, which is generally held in Baghdad, that the changes of Government in England should bring about modifications in British policy in Iraq favourable to nationalist aspirations" if Labour was victorious.¹¹⁰ A consideration of the kind of Labour propaganda and political activity Pachachi would

¹⁰⁷ Clayton to Secretary of State for the Colonies, April 29, 1929. NA, FO/371/13758/E2218/45.

¹⁰⁸ *Baghdad Times*, May 8, 1929. NA, FO/730/13758/E2753/74.

¹⁰⁹ Residency note on the Chamber of Deputies Meeting of May 7, 1929. NA, FO/730/13758/E2753/87.

¹¹⁰ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 13, July 21, 1929. NA, R/20/A/1238

have been exposed to during his periodic visits to Britain after 1926, suggests that Faysal had good reason to be hopeful.¹¹¹

Immediately following the Parliament's approval of the 1926 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, in the wake of Labour's walk-out in protest, MacDonald and the Labour Party formally "declined to extend the period for which the country accepted any responsibility for Iraq" and "urged the Government to use every effort to expedite the admission of Iraq to the League of Nations."¹¹² Supporters of the Bonar Law and then Baldwin administrations' policy toward Iraq had prepared for Labour's opposition to the Treaty in the fall of 1925 by reminding Labour and the British public generally of the first MacDonald administrations failure to deviate from it. "Every responsible government, including the Labour government," Colonial Secretary Leo Amery declared that October, had "upheld the principle" that "the policy of scuttle was impossible... because it was dishonourable" and because it would mean "dangers and difficulties far greater than those involved in the fulfillment of our obligations." Any pretense to the contrary, he insisted, was not only a "reckless disregard" for the facts, but for British honor and even national security.¹¹³ A few days later, Baldwin spoke in the House condemning the "lurid language" with which some in the government and press had attempted "to prove that the Government is pursuing a provocative policy calculated to bring about war with Turkey, that it is claiming on behalf of Iraq territory to which it has no right, and that it is undertaking

¹¹¹ Although most important work on the mandate notes that it was a Labour government that broke the stalemate and emancipated Iraq, very little attention is usually given to the reasons for that transition and almost no mention is made about Iraqi perceptions of British Labour and its meaning for Iraq. See Sluglett, pp 167-170; Marr, pp. 34-36. Dodge, pp. 34-37. Also see footnote 2 above.

¹¹² *Times of London*, January 17, 1926.

¹¹³ *Times of London*, October 2, 1925.

costly and dangerous commitments for which there is no necessity and no authority,” all key components of Labour’s propaganda. The Anglo-Iraqi relationship, Baldwin insisted, was “governed, not by an ordinary mandate, but by a Treaty of Alliance which... constitutes the recognition of the independent national life which we have aimed at establishing in Iraq in accordance with our general principle of self-government” from the beginning of the occupation. The treaty in negotiations with the Iraqis was merely a confirmation of that principle and relationship.¹¹⁴

When Amery confronted MacDonald with such arguments in the wake of Labour’s walk-out and condemnation of the Treaty in early 1926, MacDonald claimed an “injured innocence” at being accused of either having “furthered rank imperialism” by failing to overturn his predecessors’ policy in Iraq or of turning a matter of British honor to uphold their responsibilities in Iraq into a cheap political tactic. What Labour had done in office, had been forced to do for MacDonald, was to clean up the “Lausanne muddle” they inherited from the preceding decade of British policy while endeavoring to champion Iraq’s right to determine its own destiny in conformity with the principles of the party.¹¹⁵

In the wake of the Treaty’s ratification, the ILP assembled an Imperial Policy Commission to advise the Labour Party. At the annual conference in March, the Commission’s report suggested that the League of Nations be imbued with the power to more directly influence the manner in which less developed regions, such as the mandated territories, were being guided toward self-government with an eye to realizing

¹¹⁴ *Times of London*, October 9, 1925.

¹¹⁵ *Times of London*, February 19, 1926. For examples of the Bonar Law and Baldwin administrations’ admonition of Labour’s criticisms of British policy in Iraq concerning the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, see *Times of London*, October 2, 3, 9, 14; December 17, 22 and 24, 1925 and the *Daily Telegraph* October 3 and 9 and December 18, 21, and 22, 1925 and February 19, 1926.

a “Socialist Empire Policy” designed to accelerate the advancement of such regions to self-governing status. Iraq, however, was entitled to the immediate advent of self-government and membership to the League of Nations. When the next Labour government takes power, the ILP demanded, Iraq should be emancipated in a general shift away from determining the destiny of all British possessions, including the commonwealth itself.¹¹⁶

The announcement of the League of Nation’s decision to award Mosul to the British in December 1925 inspired *Foreign Affairs*, the UDC’s monthly magazine on international relations, to review the history of Anglo-Iraqi relations to illustrate how Britain’s “right of conquest” had prevailed, but, from the perspective of the League, in the name of maintaining a “durable peace.” The lesson to be learned, the writer proposed, was that, although imperial power remained, perhaps unavoidably, a significant factor in international relations, the British people remained responsible to ensure that Iraq “should not be treated as a colony.”¹¹⁷ It was the responsibility of Labour, the writer argued, to provide the will of the British people to use the League to curtail imperial power with a political framework of action.¹¹⁸ *Foreign Affairs* expressed its relief that an agreement between the Turkish and British government’s had been reached in July of 1926, but lamented the “bullying style” of the Baldwin administration in reaching it as well as its “intransigence” in recognizing the legitimacy of Turkey’s claims or in accommodating Turkish interests even in the face of possible conflict.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ The text of these 1926 reports appear in full in *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Carlisle March-April, 1929* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1929). *PHM*. Also see I.L.P. Empire Policy Committee, *Socialism and the Empire* (London: I.L.P. Publication Department, 1926). *LSE, ILP/5/1926/39*.

¹¹⁷ *Foreign Affairs*, January, 1926.

¹¹⁸ *Foreign Affairs*, February, 1926.

¹¹⁹ *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1926.

Foreign Affairs was also extremely critical of the 1928 draft of the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty which, the writer argued, had only been signed by the al Askari coalition under “severe pressure” and that “much more would be needed” to get it ratified by the Iraqi Parliament, for

the present treaty in no way changes the position as it has existed up till now. The British High Commissioner retains his right of constant supervision and of interference in Iraqi affairs. The style of the treaty has been slightly altered in deference to the fictitious independence of His Majesty the King of Iraq... and there is a promise of Iraq's admission to the League in 1932, but this promise is made conditional upon Iraq's progress and demeanour during those four years; and as there is no unbiased judge of Iraq's conduct, Mesopotamian politicians may be forgiven for seeing in those conditions a possibility of evading the obligation at Great Britain's pleasure.¹²⁰

As Iraqi popular opposition to the Treaty was being mobilized and deployed by Yasin and his collaborators over the summer of 1928, *Foreign Affairs* commented that

it is a grave mistake, often made in England, to think that there are any sections of the Mesopotamian population which are not nationalistic or are not striving for the complete independence... in accordance with the promises given by the Allies during the Great War. This general desire on the part of all Mesopotamians, without exception, to free themselves from mandatory tutelage may appear unwise, and there may be many outside observers who believe it to be in the true interests of the social and cultural progress of the Iraqi population to be guided by Great Britain's expert advice... but it is a fact that the Mesopotamians will not accept voluntarily anything short of complete independence.¹²¹

The Anglo-Iraqi alliance the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty was meant to convey was little more, the writer declared, than a “thinly veiled protectorate.”¹²²

In April 1929, with the general elections in Britain still underway, ILP member of Parliament James Maxton set out the ILP's view of the incoming government's responsibilities toward the Empire in his opening speech as Conference chair.

The Government that assumed the direction of their affairs after the election had

¹²⁰ *Foreign Affairs*, February, 1928.

¹²¹ *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1928.

¹²² *Foreign Affairs*, April, 1928.

not merely the duty of solving the problems of this nation. The votes of the 20,000,000 electors in this country gave it the right to control the destinies of hundreds of millions of people in India, Africa, and other parts of the world... Labour had the right, not only to awaken hope in the hearts of the British working-class, but to revive hope in the hearts of all the people in the British Empire. They had to right and duty to say to these people, they had been compelled to live under awful conditions, they desired to make them free men. Free to define for themselves the political and economic conditions under which they should choose to live, absolutely free to settle their own destinies.¹²³

When, in the fall of 1929, it had become clear that Labour would take the elections, *Foreign Affairs* identified the failure of the first MacDonald administration to alter his predecessors' imperial policy as a key criticism that the second MacDonald government would have to answer to in taking office once again. Dedicating an entire issue to the subject entitled "East and West" that August, *Foreign Affairs* began with UDC co-founder Norman Angell's discussion of the question, "what is our substitute for imperialism." Angell's key point was that Labour's substitute for imperialism was not "absolute Nationalism, the 'right' of each to be 'free and independent'" which too many "Socialist critics of imperialism" tended to offer as the "the only alternative to imperialism." What the leaders of the Labour movement recognized and their critics, even in their own camp, failed to see, he continued, was that "'absolute' self-determination, or sovereignty, or independence, is incompatible with civilization."

To talk, as anti-imperialist critics sometimes do, as though a few thousand desert tribesman or Hispano-Indian peasants, if only they will call themselves a 'nation', should have complete control of raw materials indispensable to the world as a whole, or the right to forbid their use; or the right to block some world highway; is to set up standards which in fact will not be observed, and which perhaps in ethics do not deserve observance.¹²⁴

The "remedy for Imperialism," Angell argued, was not nationalism, "which threatens to

¹²³ *ILP Report of the Annual Conference held at Carlisle March-April, 1929* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1929). PHM

¹²⁴ *Foreign Affairs*, August, 1929.

Balkanize the world, “but Internationalism” dedicated to protecting, but also limiting the rights of nations, “in the same way that in any civilized society the right of the individual must be made subject to the general interest in order that the individual can live at all.”¹²⁵

Among the first acts of the Labour government pertaining to British-Arab relations was the final settlement after years of negotiations of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty a little over a month after taking office in August 1929 in which the British occupation of Egypt would be terminated, British troops reduced to key stations along the Suez Canal and the British government would unconditionally approve of Egypt’s membership into the League of Nations. Unsurprisingly, the Residency would report in August that the Iraqi Parliament and press were keenly interested in these developments, with relevant debates in the British House published in full in the press. The potential promise of the advent of a second Labour government for a nationalist agenda in Iraq was, according to the Residency, all but proven by Labour’s ending of the Anglo-Egyptian stalemate.¹²⁶

On September 14, such hopes seemed to be vindicated by the Labour government’s announcement of unconditional support for Iraq’s membership in the League of Nations within three years. In less than a week, Faysal had asked Sa’dun to return to office as Prime Minister, which he promptly did with his original 1926 agenda of reducing to a minimum all administrative positions held by non-Iraqis and to reduce the contracts with those that remained to the shortest possible period and to reorient Iraqi trade regulations around Iraqi revenue production, rather than British profits.¹²⁷ Within two months of taking office, however, Sa’dun took his own life, leaving a note addressed

¹²⁵ *Foreign Affairs*, August, 1929.

¹²⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 17, August 16, 1929. NA, R/20/A/1238

¹²⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 20. September 27, 1929. NA, R/20/A/1238

to his oldest son implicating both the English and Iraqi nationalists as the sources of his torment.¹²⁸ “The nation,” Sa’dun wrote, “expects service, but the English do not agree. I have no supporters, the Iraqis who demand independence are weak, powerless, and very far from independence... they consider me a traitor to my country and a servant to the English... I who am the most loyal and fervid servant of my country.”¹²⁹

The Residency expressed its shock and befuddlement at Sa’dun’s actions and his reasoning especially in light of the Labour government’s clear resolve to settle the Anglo-Iraqi stalemate on terms far better than Sa’dun could ever have hoped for. They could only conclude that Sa’dun continued to have deep reservations about how the final settlement would reflect upon himself and the Hisb al Taqaddam, having been the government and party most pliant beneath the weight of British pressure and ultimatums.¹³⁰ The marked and immediate transition to a policy of obstinate obstruction to any cooperation with British advisors and the fomenting of an even more violently anti-colonialist political climate at a national level under Sa’dun’s successor, Tawfiq’s brother, Naji Beg Suwaidi after November 18, I argue, sheds considerable light on Sa’dun’s reasoning in taking his own life.¹³¹

In addition to abruptly ending discussions that had been ongoing between the Residency and the Sa’dun Cabinet over the renewal of expiring contracts for British officials and advisors, Iraqi Ministers under the Suwaidi administration, already noted as being “less helpful and friendly” over the preceding year, became openly obstinate and

¹²⁸ Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, p. 269-271.

¹²⁹ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 24. November 25, 1929. NA, FO/371/13760

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

dismissive of their British counterparts, giving the impression to Iraqi administrators throughout the country that “British officials no longer counted,” even in the contentions areas of finance and the military.¹³² Within a fortnight of Suwaidi’s appointment, the Residency reported

The popular contention is that if admission into the League is to mean anything... it must mean the reduction almost to the point of abolition of British interference in the administration of the country, consequently, Iraq must begin to prepare at once for that eventuality by taking over herself, as far as possible, full responsibility in every branch of government.

The Residence left no doubt of its view that “the inspiration and justification for this policy is found in the recent declaration of the British Government concerning their support in 1932 of Iraq’s candidature for admission into the League of Nations.”¹³³

Troublingly, the promise of independence did not seem to quell the anti-British sentiment in the press, but rather to set it aflame with most papers remaining in publication violently disparaging the legacy of misrule and suppression of Iraqi progress under the British.¹³⁴ Especially with the current state of nationalist agitation having been raised to such a fervor by Faysal himself, the Colonial Office feared, the emasculation of British authority by Labour’s announcement now threatened to “let loose the forces of disorder” on an Iraqi nation that had been fooled into believing it was, in any way, “able to stand alone” or able “effectively to govern itself.”¹³⁵

Under the direction of Yasin, Timmun, and Rashid Ali, the opposition to the Hisb al Taqaddam in Parliament continued to hammer the Suwaidi government as it had

¹³² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 25. December 9, 1929. *NA, FO/371/13760* and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, pp. 254-264.

¹³³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 25. December 9, 1929. *NA, FO/371/13760*

¹³⁴ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 2. January 20, 1930. *NA, R/20/A/1238*

¹³⁵ Air Staff Report, January 2, 1930. *NA, CO/730/151/78025*

Sa'dun's for failing to transfer authority from British to Iraqi officials fast enough.¹³⁶ Accordingly, days before negotiations for a new Treaty between the Iraqi government and the MacDonald administration were meant to begin on April 1, 1930, Naji Suwaidi handed his resignation to Faysal on the grounds that his Cabinet had "encountered obstacles which have prevented them from carrying out" the transfer from British to Iraqi authority, implicating the obstruction of the Residency.¹³⁷ The nationalist agitation against the Suwaidi administration had grown so voluminous by then, according to Clayton's replacement as High Commissioner upon his sudden and untimely death Sir Frances Humphrys, that his resignation was accompanied by a demonstration of over eight thousand Iraqis at which speeches were given condemning British policy in the Middle East generally.¹³⁸ Faysal's choice to replace Suwaidi as Prime Minister and negotiate the new Treaty was Nuri al Said, Faysal's most dependable and most politically influential collaborator from the early days in Damascus. Indicative of the government's treatment of the press by this point, Nuri opened his administration by shutting down most of the nationalist papers in publication within weeks of taking office and reviving several that had been suppressed over the months before Labour's announcement of support for League membership for the same violation of "publishing articles prejudicial to the internal and external peace of Iraq."¹³⁹

Although Faysal and Nuri agreed with Humphrys' request that the negotiations opening on April 1, 1930 be undertaken with the utmost secrecy in order to prevent

¹³⁶ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 3, February 3, 1930 and Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 4, February 17, 1930 *NA, R/20/A/1238*

¹³⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 6, March 17, 1930. *NA, R/20/A/1238*

¹³⁸ Humphrys to Secretary of State for the Colonies, March 5, 1930. *NA, FO/371/14503/E1701/216-7*.

¹³⁹ *al Istiqlal*, *al Nahdhah*, and *al Zaman* were all allowed to resume publication while *al Rafidan*, *Fata al Iraq*, *al Bilad*, and *Sadiq al Iraq* were suppressed, see Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 7, March 31, 1930 and Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 9. April 28, 1930. *NA, R/20/A/1238*

“tendentious articles in the press” from fomenting public agitation in Iraq and unsettling the “friendly spirit” and “high hopes of success” that characterized the first meeting, they clearly intended to use the press to bring pressure to bear on the British delegates. By the second meeting Humphrys was already complaining to the Iraqi delegates that the Baghdad papers reflected an inside knowledge of the negotiations they could only have obtained from the delegates themselves and that the articles in question reiterated the very objections to the treaty that Faysal and Nuri had made the day before, along with its lament that British obstinacy had “doomed [the negotiations] to failure.”¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, negotiations proceeded quickly and within a matter of months, both Nuri and Faysal had put their signatures to a Treaty that, according to Peter Sluglett, “represented a limited progress towards national sovereignty.”¹⁴¹ With League membership immanent, both parties to the negotiations were far more amenable to small changes in the language of the Treaty as well as larger changes, including the British declaration that full responsibility for the maintenance of internal order rested with Faysal, while formally promising to come to Iraq’s aid in the case of external invasion. Iraq was to receive its own air force and the right to maintain RAF bases, though those bases would technically remain British property. The difficult matter of the financial agreement was largely left out of the Treaty and personally negotiated by Nuri in the subsequent weeks, to similar effect.¹⁴²

The day after Nuri and Faysal signed the new Treaty, on July 1, 1930 the Iraqi Parliament was dissolved and new elections called over the issue of ratifying it. The

¹⁴⁰ “Iraq: Record of Proceedings of Meetings of the British and Iraqi Delegations in Baghdad, April-June, 1930, concerning the proposed new Anglo-Iraq Treaty,” p. 5. NA, CO/730/151/15.

¹⁴¹ Sluglett, p. 181 and Hasani, *Tarikh Al-Sihafah*, vol. 2, pp. 264-265.

¹⁴² Sluglett, p. 180-182.

British agent responsible for collating and interpreting all of the information about the Baghdadi political landscape during this period was Special Security Officer for Baghdad and RAF Captain Gerald De Gaury. Although admittedly bewildered by the seemingly chaotic manner in which Iraqi opposition was developing around the sole idea of ousting the British despite the promise of admission to the League by Labour, De Gaury also began to piece together what might also have been a far more organized political tactic than it appeared at first glance. When Ja'far Abu Timmun's opposition coalition Hisb al Watani boycotted both the elections and Yasin al Hashimi for his refusal to follow suit, De Gaury interpreted the rejection of Yasin as "owing to his agreement with the present Cabinet," meaning that Yasin "is secretly in favour of the Treaty" and that the Cabinet and Faysal were dependent upon his ultimate approval. The Hisb al Taqaddam, De Gaury reported "would never have dared to ratify [the Treaty] alone" in the face of such widespread hostility to it and "the King is less worried about the attitude of the serving ministers than he is about the man outside the government, i.e. Yasin Pasha."¹⁴³

De Gaury kept a close eye on Yasin, convinced that he was playing the opposition against the Palace and the Cabinet by building his influence in both, but also in the expanding Iraqi army. By the end of July, De Gaury could report that the "Iraqi Army is irretrievably infected with the virus of political intrigue." The "influence of Yassin Pasha al Hashimi is great" De Gaury lamented, because of the fact that, on the one hand, "promotion and desirable appointments are more and more often obtained by those who have influence outside [the army] in political circles," a patronage system Yasin was busily organizing around his person, as well as the fact that "more Officers are politically

¹⁴³ De Gaury to ASI July 26, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/267*.

inclined than are not,” meaning that Yasin’s centrality to the opposition movement made him popular among the officers in general.¹⁴⁴

By August, De Gaury reported, Yasin had used the boycott of the elections, and indeed, of himself, to his political advantage both within the opposition and in relation to the government. Yasin was already inducing key members of the *Hisb al Watani* away from their boycott of the elections with promises of position in the new Parliament and even came out publicly in praise of Ja’far abu Timmun, who he enjoined to end the hopeless boycott of the elections, for “it was just men like Ja’far who are wanted in the Parliament and they should not cut themselves off from active work.” De Gaury had no doubt that Yasin’s efforts would put him in a strong position in relation to Nuri al Said. Specifically, De Gaury noted, because of the strength of Yasin’s popularity and influence among the most influential nationalist MP’s, “when Nuri Pasha returns... it will be difficult for Nuri to pick M.P.s who will follow him and not Yassin, but also be sufficiently ‘National’... he will find himself inevitably selecting those who will also and more closely follow Yassin.”¹⁴⁵ Perceived as an advantage, rather than a difficulty, however, the narrowing of the pool of candidates to those acceptable to both Nuri and Yasin would also seem to legitimate the later alignment of government and opposition parties.

For the time being, however, it was advantageous to the opposition to establish the illegitimacy not only of the Treaty, but of the administration that would ratify it for the sake of future negotiations. Accordingly, on November 1, 1930, Ja’far abu Timmun acting as the Secretary General of the *Hisb al Watani* wrote to the Secretary General of the League of Nations a letter denouncing the Nuri al Said government. The al Said

¹⁴⁴ De Gaury to ASI, July 22, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/267*.

¹⁴⁵ De Gaury to ASI, August 2, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/267*.

administration, Timmun declared, was formed in an unconstitutional manner as a means of solving the tension between the Palace and the British government over issues relating to the Treaty. Once in office, Nuri dissolved the Parliament “so as to get rid of a controlling body and establish an unconstitutional regime with the approval of the British High Commissioner in contradiction to the specific provisions of the Constitution deposited in the League of Nations.” Timmun described the suppression of the press, prosecution of journalists, prohibition of public demonstrations, and general disregard for the voices of the Iraqi people. The Treaty concluded in this manner has, not unexpectedly, “caused general indignation all over the country” for their tolerance of “British imperialism and domination and imposed British tutelage and protection” for the next 25 years. In order to legitimate these actions, Timmun went on, a “false election” was forced on the country through the collusion of corrupt Iraqi politicians and their British advisory staff which the opposition, led by Timmun, had boycotted and rejected as unconstitutional and illegitimate. Timmun enjoined the League Secretary to convey to the members of the League that the Iraqi nation “considers null and void every treaty, agreement, concession, and any international instrument which the present unconstitutional government and any illicit Parliament of Assembly which it may cause to Assemble, have executed or may agree to on behalf of Iraq.”¹⁴⁶

When Nuri al Said returned to Iraq in September, he did so with the stipulation that the Treaty he had negotiated had to be accepted or rejected by the Iraqi Parliament without debate or amendment, establishing both the character of the Treaty as but the latest British *fait accompli* as well as Nuri’s status as the political strong-man of Iraq that would maintain him in power for the next twenty years of Iraqi history.¹⁴⁷ Yasin

¹⁴⁶ Ja’far Abu Timmun to Secretary General of the League of Nations November 1, 1930. NA, CO/730/151/16.

¹⁴⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 19, September 15, 1930. NA, R/20/A/1238 Marr has identified this moment as marking a shift in Iraqi politics in which Faysal and his supporters tightened their grip on the political landscape and “spawned a new opposition” unhappy with the persistent

immediately responded with a coordinated assault in the press, not on Nuri, tellingly, but on the entire legacy of British policy in Iraq.¹⁴⁸ A series of demonstrations denouncing British policy in Iraq, either organized or encouraged by Yasin, were announced in the press, only to be thwarted by the police and resulting in the arrest of their promoters.¹⁴⁹ By mid-November, however, Yasin's newly founded opposition coalition party, the *Hisb al Ikha al Watani*, had succeeded in drawing in Ja'far Abu Timmun, Rashid Ali al Gilani, and even Naji al Suwaidi, effectively absorbing nearly all opposition parties and even key members of the *Hisb al Taqaddam* into one group under Yasin's leadership. The most pressing concern for De Gaury was not the coalition of nationalist opposition itself, however, but the *Hisb's* unification of nationalist sentiment throughout the country from widely diverse communities in an attempt to become a truly national party inclusive of all sects and classes. Tribal landowners like Abdul Wahid,¹⁵⁰ the "workmen of the towns and the fellaheen,"¹⁵¹ and key figures of the Shi'a *ulema*¹⁵² all seemed to be drawn into the new coalition *Hisb*, the declared program of which was to reject the Treaty, obstruct its passage through Parliament, disempower British officials and advisors toward weakening the hold of the British down to nothing and, ultimately, to unite Arab opposition to imperial rule through out the region. By the end of November 1930, De Gaury reported that the *Hisb al Ikha al Watan* was advancing so rapidly that, "if things

role of the British in backing his regime. See Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2004), p. 35.

¹⁴⁸ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 19, September 15, 1930. *NA, R/20/A/1238*

¹⁴⁹ DeGaury to ASI September 23, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/268* and Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 19 and 20, September 15 and October 1, 1930. *NA, R/20/A/1238*

¹⁵⁰ De Gaury to ASI, November 18, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/268/30A*

¹⁵¹ De Gaury to ASI November 12, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/268/29A*

¹⁵² De Gaury to ASI, December 23, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/268/34A*

continue at the present rate about two thirds of the inhabitants of importance will have joined in about another six weeks.”¹⁵³

De Gaury was taken, however, by the seeming imperviousness of the Nuri al Said administration to the attacks of the opposition and the near absence of any attempt by the government to defend the Treaty it intended to ratify. Admittedly, he reasoned in mid-December, “the Parliament is sufficiently ‘rigged’” by Nuri and the Palace to insulate themselves from an opposition majority and, “there is no other way of making themselves felt except by forwarding petitions... which is not very effective, or by direct action which they will not attempt unless galled beyond reason.” The most likely explanation, De Gaury concluded, for the dilatory attitude of the government toward the Treaty and, presumably, their own political fate at the hands of the opposition, was Nuri’s intention to cast himself and his government as “the pathetic victims of British coercion” after the Treaty’s ratification and Iraq’s membership to the League of Nations. With Yasin and the new opposition coalition presumably prepared to accept their beleaguered compatriots with open arms in the wake of independence, the Sherifian court at the helm of the Iraqi government stood a good chance of coming out of the transition as “national heroes.”¹⁵⁴

Over the course of 1931 and 1932, the *Hisb al Ikha al Watani* maintained a steady stream of anti-British public sentiment,¹⁵⁵ occasionally breaking into demonstrations and even a general strike in the summer of 1931.¹⁵⁶ Nuri and Faysal, who, despite the continued ability of the opposition to attract thousands to rallies denouncing Nuri’s government,¹⁵⁷ remained, according to Sluglett, supremely confident “that until another and stronger threat developed, their own position was virtually unassailable,” passed the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty through the al Said Cabinet with little difficulty or fan-fare,

¹⁵³ De Gaury to AIS, November 24, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/382/7H*.

¹⁵⁴ De Gaury to AIS, December 17, 1930. *NA, AIR/23/382/13A*.

¹⁵⁵ De Gaury to ASI, January 19, 1931. *NA, AIR/23/268/56A* and De Gaury to ASI, March 3, 1931. *NA, AIR/23/268/44A*

¹⁵⁶ For an account of the strike, see De Gaury to ASI July 16, 1931 and Sluglett, pp. 206-212.

¹⁵⁷ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report No. 9, April 29, 1931. *NA, R/20/A/1238*

presenting its ratification as both the only path to League Membership and, in any event, a British *fait accompli*.¹⁵⁸ Even as key figures in the opposition remained active propagandists and organizers against the government, Faysal and Nuri gradually made positions for them available in the government one by one,¹⁵⁹ to the disgust of De Gaury, who described the opposition leaders in early 1931 as “actuated by their own desires for lucrative appointments” and “a band of unsympathetic schemers... who only use [the people] when it suits them for what their own ends dictate.”¹⁶⁰ In any event, the Sherifian court’s manipulation of the election system to their advantage over the preceding years had left many supporters of the opposition and government alike with the impression that elections of any kind were rigged at best and, at worst, “little more than a ‘nomination’,” with the result that many influential tribal leaders and Shi’a *ulema* exchanged their party loyalties for a hostility “against all Baghdad political parties” equally by the eve of Iraqi independence, according to De Gaury.¹⁶¹

When Faysal invited Rashid Ali, clearly one of the most vocal members of the opposition, into his court as his most trusted advisor in June 1932, the Residency remarked on Faysal’s obvious transition toward characterizing his court as having always been friendly to the nationalist opposition at heart. The political malaise of the Iraqi people for whom such gestures were meant to appeal, however, was palpable by the announcement of Iraq’s membership to the League in October of 1932. As the Residency stated in one of its final reports, “it cannot be said that public opinion has been much moved by the emancipation of Iraq from mandatory control. Nor is this surprising since,

¹⁵⁸ Sluglett, p. 182.

¹⁵⁹ De Gaury to ASI, November 10, 1931. NA, AIR/23/382/87a.

¹⁶⁰ De Gaury to ASI, January 8, 1931. NA, AIR/23/268/45A.

¹⁶¹ De Gaury to ASI, May 19, 1931. NA, AIR/23/382/32A and 33A.

outside official circles, the event has not been marked by any notable change.”¹⁶² Almost immediately, Faysal asked Nuri to step into the background, where he had always proven far more influential tool of the Palace, and made it known that he desired Yasin al Hashimi to form a government as Prime Minister and, therefore, complete the pretense that the Palace had always been aligned with the nationalist opposition.¹⁶³ Yasin, for his part, did not take the bait just yet, perhaps, as De Gaury had accused him a year prior, for his ambition to become the “Dictator of a Britain-rid Iraq,”¹⁶⁴ or perhaps, as it was “freely said in the Bazaars,” according to the Residency, that “he would not sacrifice his honour for a ‘place’.”¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, although Faysal was made to settle for the undistinguished, but innocuous, civil servant Naji Shaukat for the first Prime Minister of his independent monarchy,¹⁶⁶ Rashid Ali and Yasin al Hashimi would both serve terms as Prime Minister within a few years of Iraqi independence and would continue to do so whenever Nuri al Said, the undisputed master of the Iraqi political landscape for the duration of the monarchy and the prime inheritor of Faysal’s political power on the King’s death, felt he needed to, temporarily, present a less authoritarian image to the Iraqi people.

In *Inventing Iraq*, Toby Dodge has argued that the conflict of interest inherent in the British Empire’s self-appointment as a mandatory power responsible for the state-making project in Iraq inevitably resulted in the production of a ‘quasi-state’ in Iraq,

¹⁶² Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report no. 21, October 17, 1932. *BL, L/P&S/10/1313*

¹⁶³ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report no. 22, October 22, 1932. *BL, L/P&S/10/1313*

¹⁶⁴ De Gaury to ASI, March 18, 1931. *NA, AIR/.23/382/26a*.

¹⁶⁵ Office of the High Commissioner, Intelligence Report no. 21, October 17, 1932. *BL, L/P&S/10/1313*

¹⁶⁶ Sluglett, pp. 217.

characterized for the duration of its history by authoritarian rule through a system of political patronage under the protection of foreign powers installed by the British in 1920.¹⁶⁷ Certainly, Nuri al Said's twenty-year tenure as the embodiment of political power in Iraq and primary British client in the region lends credence to Dodge's argument. Similarly, the tendency of Iraqi nationalism to reject liberal democratic forms in favor of communist and, later, fascist forms developing in the political margins only to explode onto the scene in the form of *coup d'états* also speaks to the experience of being manipulated and betrayed by their own leaders in the very moment of independence. As the course of Iraqi history would bare out, the pattern of incorporation of Iraqi nationalist movements by the authoritarian center or its rivals to bolster or shift power was as regular as the subsequent suppression and even destruction of those movements once the desired adjustments to the Iraqi political landscape had been achieved. Even at the time of the writing of this study, an administration backed by foreign powers continues to struggle with both a wide spectrum of ethnic and sectarian nationalist groupings as well as the organized efforts of a diverse set of Iraqi leaders to break even the national borders set for them by colonial powers during the First World War and redraw the post-Ottoman states as, they feel, they should have been drawn in those early days.

In commemorating Iraqi independence in October of 1932, WN Ewer wrote a piece in the *Daily Herald* entitled "A Land of Empire Day-Dreams" that placed the momentous

¹⁶⁷ Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2003), pp. xi-xix, 31 and 169-171. Dodge's argument about this particular aspect of Iraqi history is put more succinctly in Toby Dodge, "Iraq: The Contradictions of Exogenous State-Building in Historical Perspective," in *From Nation-Building to State-Building*, ed. Mark T. Berger (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 143-164. Toby Dodge takes the term 'quasi-state' from Robert Jackson who identifies the mandate system as the turning point in an international political system now responsible for protecting the national integrity of states not only incapable of protecting themselves from internal collapse or external invasion, but often comprised of regimes completely out of conformity with international human rights regulations. See Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

occasion in the context of Labour political identity. Independence for “Iraq, alias Mesopotamia, alias ‘Mes-pot’,” Ewer wryly noted, was but the most recent transition of status for a state that “surely must have had more than any other spot on the earth” by 1932. Reflecting back to the early days of the Great War, Ewer pointed out that, in Britain, “nobody knew much about it or cared much about it. The man in the street in England could hardly have told you where Baghdad was or why... anyone should be concerned about it.” Nevertheless, he argued, echoing nearly twenty years of dissenting propaganda, “for all that, the war, so far as Britain and Germany were concerned, was very largely a war over Baghdad and Iraq.” Ewer reviewed the history of the Great War and the mandate in Iraq that followed, placing oil politics and the “megalomaniac dream” of the Eastern Empire at the center of the story of fraught inter-imperial and international relations leading up to Iraq’s final emancipation. But “the end,” he warned, “was not yet.” Petroliferous and strategically positioned Iraq was “still the center of the world” and British statesmen, however “harassed by a hundred legacies of that folly” that was the mandate were “still thinking in the same terms as those in which Disraeli thought.”

The mandate is ending; but there is a treaty in its place... Iraq comes into the League of Nations. But Great Britain does not come out of Iraq. The chapter is not yet closed. And there may be a pack of trouble still ahead for us in these blood-stained lands.¹⁶⁸

Ewer could not have been more prescient in his thoughts. For indeed, the British government would continue to maintain a powerful influence in Iraq through the very leaders various administrations had put into power under the mandate, with Nuri al Said at the center, until 1958 and even re-occupy Iraq a second time for nearly a decade in

¹⁶⁸ *Daily Herald*, October 14, 1932.

1947 specifically to reverse the overthrow of Nuri by his long-time political opponent-cum-collaborator-cum-rival Rashid Ali al Gaylani.

Just as the First World War had seen the rise of Labour as a legitimate party of opposition and the transition toward a revision of imperial policy in the inter-war period, so too did the Second World War see the advent in 1945 of the first Labour government since the second MacDonald administration and a revision of the preceding twenty years of Conservative imperial policy.¹⁶⁹ After yet another twenty years of Conservative imperial management, fraught by Cold-War politics and nationalist revolutions, a fourth Labour government in 1964 implemented policies that would, finally, result in the near wholesale dismantlement of the British Empire.¹⁷⁰

This study has sought to bring the two trajectories of anti-colonial nationalism in Britain and Iraq into a single narrative as a means of illustrating that the paths of the metropolitan centers and peripheral possessions of European empires toward the status of nations both independent and free of possessions was not over-determined by the interests of imperial powers nor by the inevitability of indigenous nationalism's victory over foreign influence as many histories seem to assert. Nor were they the inevitable product of the irrepressible march of liberal democracy from the Enlightenment to 'modernity.' Rather, I have attempted to show, this process was the result, perhaps

¹⁶⁹ John Callaghan has shown, however, that, upon the advent Attlee government in 1945, all Labour ministers were in accord with their Conservative and Liberal counterparts in the conviction that "Britain was and must remain a world power based upon its Empire-Commonwealth" and that it was domestic financial difficulties, nationalist agitation in the possessions, and international politics that pushed Attlee toward a decolonization agenda in India, Africa, and the Middle East. John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 162-190.

¹⁷⁰ Paul. Kelemen, "The British Labor Party and the Economics of Decolonization: the debate over Kenya," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8, no. 3 (2007).

ironically, of compromises made by individuals seeking to harness the desire shared by most peoples to determine their own destinies in a complex web of contests for political power on a global level. As the fate of nationalist movements in both Britain and Iraq have shown, the path to independence from imperial power and the anti-democratic weight of imperial responsibilities was neither direct nor inevitable. As the recent British-American led coalition occupation of Iraq suggests, this path is also incomplete. Just as commentators on the recent war and current international nation-making project in Iraq have largely failed to examine the transnational history of international relations responsible for the emergence and endurance of Saddam Husayn's regime in Iraq and the resurgence of a quasi-imperial global political agenda in the United States after September 2001 that overthrew him, so too has the history of decolonization tended to focus on the immediate political contexts of regime change and to emphasize the role of contemporaneous power relationships in which the imperial center always plays the dominant role, even in choosing to withdraw its control. As the recent questioning of international power relations and the complicity of powerful democratic nations in maintaining post-emancipation authoritarian regimes raised by the near simultaneous rejection of those regimes in Sudan, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan and Libya has pointed up, a transnational approach to colonialism, decolonization, and the persistence of colonial frameworks of rule remains both necessary and, yet, sorely lacking.

Hold the accolades on China's 'green leap forward'

By Bjorn Lomborg, Wednesday, April 20, 7:50 PM

As the world's factory floor, China is not an obvious environmental leader. It is beleaguered by severe pollution and generates more carbon emissions than any other nation. Yet many have trumpeted it as an emerging "green giant" for its non-carbon-based energy production and its aggressive promises to cut carbon emissions. New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman described China's "green leap forward" as "the most important thing to happen" at the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

But the facts do not support this "green" success story.

China indeed invests more than any other nation in environmentally friendly energy production: \$34 billion in 2009, or twice as much as the United States. Almost all of its investment, however, is spent producing green energy for Western nations that pay heavy subsidies for consumers to use solar panels and wind turbines.

China was responsible for half of the world's production of solar panels in 2010, but only 1 percent was installed there. Just as China produces everything from trinkets to supertankers, it is exporting green technology — which makes it a giant of manufacturing, not of environmental friendliness.

In wind power, China both produces and consumes. In 2009, it put up about a third of the world's new wind turbines. But much of this has been for show. A 2008 Citigroup analysis found that about one-third of China's wind power assets were not in use. Many turbines are not connected to the transmission grid. Chinese power companies built wind turbines that they didn't use as the cheapest way of satisfying — on paper — government requirements to boost renewable energy capacity.

Consider the bigger picture: 87 percent of the energy produced in China comes from fossil fuels, the vast majority of it from coal, the International Energy Agency found in 2010.

The explosive recent growth in Chinese solar and wind generation equates to going from zilch to a small fraction: Wind today generates just 0.05 percent of China's energy, and solar is responsible for one-half of one-thousandth of 1 percent.

The avoided carbon emissions from all of China's solar and wind generation — even maintained over the entire century — would lower temperatures in 2100 by 0.00002 degrees Fahrenheit. That is the equivalent, based on mainstream climate models, of delaying temperature rises at the end of the century by around five hours.

Of course, proponents argue that China has promised to do much more: It vowed to cut carbon intensity (the amount of emissions produced per dollar of gross domestic product) 40 to 45 percent by 2020. But this is essentially promising to do nothing new: IEA projections, using expected growth and development and absent any new policies, show carbon intensity already on track to fall 40 percent. Even with this reduction, by 2020 China will have quadrupled its emissions from 1990.

China also aims for non-fossil-fuel energy sources to account for 11.4 percent of primary energy consumption by 2015. At best, this is a promise to slide backward merely slowly. Today, China gets 13 percent of its energy from non-fossil fuels, particularly biomass and hydropower, with a little nuclear energy and a minuscule amount of solar and wind power.

The reason China does not use more wind and solar power is simple: Even when mass-produced with cheap labor, solar panels and wind turbines are not cost-effective replacements for fossil fuels. They appear so in the West only where politicians create generous subsidies for their implementation.

There is, however, a mostly untold story from China that shows an area where the promise of a "green future" is not without foundation. China leads the world in the production of solar heaters. This industry doesn't receive subsidies because it doesn't need them: Solar heating is cost-effective.

Heat constitutes almost half of global energy demand, much of it from households wanting to cook, heat water or warm their environments. Solar heaters can heat water cheaply — at about one-quarter the price of an electric water heater. In China, solar heaters provide four times more energy than wind turbines. Exports of this product bring in more than \$6 billion a year.

Because solar heaters are cheaper than fossil fuel heating, consumers don't need to be paid large subsidies to use them.

This is the green lesson China holds: A green future will result not from subsidizing immature technology today but from developing competitive green technology that is effective and cheap. Wind and solar power are not yet competitive. Research would be a much better investment for Western countries than subsidizing imports of today's green technology from China. Until we can make alternative energy technology effective and affordable for everybody, there will be no happy ending to the "green" success story.

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